



Thomas Michael Loomer



PLAIN SERMONS,

BY

CONTRIBUTORS

TO THE

“TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.”

“ We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

“ For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.”—2 COR. xiii. 8, 9.

VOL. V.

By J. H. Newman D.D.

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SERMON CXXIX.

THE LAPSE OF TIME.

ECCLES. ix. 10.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

SOLOMON’S advice that we should do whatever our hand findeth to do with our might, naturally directs our thoughts to that great work in which all others are included, which will outlive all other works, and for which alone we really are placed here below—the salvation of our souls. And the consideration of this great work, which must be done with all our might, and completed before the grave, whither we go, presents itself to our minds with especial force at the commencement of a new year. We are now entering on a fresh stage of our life’s journey; we know well how it will end, and we see where we shall stop in the evening, though we do not see the road. And we know in what our business lies while we travel, and that it is important for us to do it with our “might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave.” This is so plain, that nothing need be said in order to convince us that it is true. We know it well; the very complaint which numbers commonly make when told of it, is that they know it already, that it is nothing new, that they have no need to be told, and that it is tiresome to hear the same thing said over and over again, and impertinent in the person who repeats it. Yes; thus it is that sinners silence their con-

sciences, by quarrelling with those who appeal to it; they defend themselves, if it may be called a defence, by pleading that they already know what they should do and do not; that they know perfectly well that they are living at a distance from God, and are in peril of eternal ruin; that they know they are making themselves children of Satan, and denying the LORD that bought them, and want no one to tell them so. Thus they witness against themselves.

However, though we already know well enough that we have much to do before we die, yet (if we will but attend) it may be of use to hear the fact dwelt upon; because by thinking over it steadily and seriously, we may possibly, through God's grace, gain some deep conviction of it; whereas while we keep to general terms, and confess that this life is important and is short, in the mere summary way in which men commonly confess it, we have, properly speaking, no knowledge of that great truth at all.

Consider, then, what it is to die: "there is no work, device, knowledge, or wisdom, in the grave." Death puts an end absolutely and irrevocably to all our plans and works, and it is inevitable. The Psalmist speaks to "high and low, rich and poor, one with another." "No man can deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him." Even "wise men die, as well as the ignorant and foolish, and leave their riches for other¹." Difficult as we may find it to bring it home to ourselves, to realize it, yet as surely as we are here assembled together, so surely will every one of us, sooner or later, one by one, be stretched on the bed of death. We naturally shrink from the thought of death, and of its attendant circumstances; but all that is hateful and fearful about it will be fulfilled in our case, one by one. But all this is nothing compared with the consequences implied in it. Death stops us; it stops our race. Men are engaged about their work, or about their pleasure; they are in the city, or the field; any how they are stopped; their deeds are suddenly gathered in—a reckoning is made—all is sealed up till the great day. What a change is this! In the words used familiarly in speaking of the dead, they are no more. They were full of schemes and projects; whether in a greater or humbler rank, they had their hopes and fears, their prospects, their pur-

¹ Psalm xlix. 2—10.

suits, their rivalries ; all these are now come to an end. One builds a house, and its roof is not finished ; another buys merchandise ; and it is not yet sold. And all their virtues and pleasing qualities which endeared them to their friends are, as far as this world is concerned, vanished. Where are they who were so active, so sanguine, so generous ? the amiable, the modest, and the kind ? We were told that they were dead ; they suddenly disappeared ; that is all we know about it. They were silently taken from us ; they are not met in the seat of the elders, nor in the assemblies of the people ; in the mixed concourse of men, nor in the domestic retirement which they prized. As Scripture describes it, "the wind has passed over them, and they are gone, and their place shall know them no more." And they have burst the many ties which held them ; they were parents, brothers, sisters, children, and friends ; but the bond of kindred is broken, and the silver cord of love is loosed. They have been followed by the vehement grief of tears, and the long sorrow of aching hearts ; but they make no return, they answer not ; they do not even satisfy our wish to know that they sorrow for us as we for them. We talk about them thenceforth as if they were persons we do not know ; we talk about them as third persons ; whereas they used to be always with us, and every other thought which was within us was shared by them. Or perhaps, if our grief is too deep, we do not mention their names at all. And their possessions, too, all fall to others. The world goes on without them ; it forgets them. Yes, so it is ; the world contrives to forget that men have souls, it looks upon them all as mere parts of some great visible system. This continues to move on ; to this the world ascribes a sort of life and personality. When one or other of its members die, it considers them only as falling out of the system, and come to nought. For a minute, perhaps, it thinks of them in sorrow, then leaves them—leaves them for ever. It keeps its eye on things seen and temporal. Truly whenever a man dies, rich or poor, an immortal soul passes to judgment ; but somehow we read of the deaths of persons we have seen or heard of, and this reflection never comes across us. Thus does the world really cast off men's souls, and recognizing only their bodies, it makes it appear as if "that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth them, as the one dieth so dieth the other ;

yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence over a beast, for all is vanity²."

But let us follow the course of a soul thus casting off the world, and cast off by it. It goes forth as a stranger on a journey. Man seems to die and to be no more, when he is but quitting us, and is really beginning to live. Then he sees sights which before it did not even enter into his mind to conceive, and the world is even less to him than he to the world. Just now he was lying on the bed of sickness, but in that moment of death what an awful change has come over him! What a crisis for him! There is stillness in the room that lately held him; nothing is doing there, for he is gone, he now belongs to others; he now belongs entirely to the LORD who bought him; to HIM he returns; but whether to be lodged safely in His place of hope, or to be imprisoned against the great day, that is another matter, that depends on the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil. And now what are his thoughts? How infinitely important now appears the value of time, now when it is nothing to him! Nothing; for though he spend centuries waiting for CHRIST, he cannot now alter his state from bad to good, or from good to bad. What he dieth that he must be for ever; as the tree falleth so must it lie. This is the comfort of the true servant of God, and the misery of the transgressor. His lot is cast once and for all, and he can but wait in hope or in dread. Men on their death-beds have declared, that no one could form a right idea of the value of time till he came to die; but if this has truth in it, how much more truly can it be said after death! What an estimate shall we form of time while we are waiting for judgment! Yes, it is we—all this, I repeat, belongs to us most intimately. It is not to be looked at as a picture, as a man might read a light book in a leisure hour. *We* must die, the youngest, the healthiest, the most thoughtless; *we* must be thus unnaturally torn in two, soul from body; and only united again to be made more thoroughly happy or miserable for ever.

Such is death considered in its inevitable necessity, and its unspeakable importance—nor can we ensure to ourselves any certain interval before its coming. The time may be long; but it may also be short. It is plain, a man may die any day; all we

² Eccles. iii. 19.

can say is, that it is unlikely that he will die. But of this, at least, we are certain, that, come it sooner or later, death is continually on the move towards us. We are ever nearer and nearer to it. Every morning we rise we are nearer that grave in which there is no work, nor device, than we were. We are now nearer the grave, than when we entered this Church. Thus life is ever crumbling away under us. What should we say to a man, who was placed on some precipitous ground, which was ever crumbling under his feet, and affording less and less secure footing, yet was careless about it? Or what should we say to one who suffered some precious liquor to run from its receptacle into the thoroughfare of men, without a thought to stop it? who carelessly looked on and saw the waste of it, becoming greater and greater every minute? But what treasure can equal time? It is the seed of eternity: yet we suffer ourselves to go on, year after year, hardly using it at all in God's service, or thinking it enough to give HIM at most a tithe or a seventh of it, while we strenuously and heartily sow to the flesh, that from the flesh we may reap corruption. We try how little we can safely give to religion, instead of having the grace to give abundantly. "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not Thy law;" so says the holy psalmist. Doubtless an inspired prophet saw far more clearly than we can see, the madness of men in squandering that treasure upon sin, which is meant to buy their chief good;—but if so, what must this madness appear in God's sight! What an inveterate malignant evil is it in the hearts of the sons of men, that thus leads them to sit down to eat, and drink, and rise up to play; when time is hurrying on, and judgment coming? We have been told what HE thinks of man's unbelief, though we cannot enter into the depths of His thoughts. HE showed it to us in act and deed, as far as we could receive it, when HE even sent His only-begotten SON into the world as at this time, to redeem us from the world,—which, most surely, was not lightly done; and we also learn His thoughts about it from the words of that most merciful SON,—which most surely were not lightly spoken, "The wicked," HE says, "shall go into everlasting punishment."

Oh! that there were such a heart in us, that we would fear God, and keep His commandments always! But it is of no use

to speak ; men know their duty—they will not do it. They say they do not need or wish to be told it, that it is an intrusion, and a rudeness, to tell them of death and judgment. So must it be,—and we, who have to speak to them, must submit to this. Speak we must, as an act of duty to God, whether they will hear, or not, and then must leave our words as a witness. Other means for rousing them we have none. We speak from CHRIST our gracious LORD, their REDEEMER, who has already pardoned them freely, yet they will not follow HIM with a true heart, and what can be done more ?

Another year is now opening upon us ; it speaks to the thoughtful, and is heard by those, who have expectant ears, and watch for CHRIST's coming. The former year is gone, it is dead, there it lies in the grave of past time, not to decay however, and be forgotten, but kept in the view of God's omniscience, with all its sins and errors irrevocably written, till, at length, it will be raised again to testify about us at the last day ; and who among us can bear the thought of his own doings, in the course of it?—all that he has said and done, all that has been conceived within his mind, or been acted on, and all that he has not said and done, which it was a duty to say or do. What a dreary prospect seems to be before us, when we reflect that we have the solemn word of truth pledged to us, in the last and most awful revelation, which God has made to us about the future, that in that day, the books will be opened, “and another book opened, which is the book of life, and the dead judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works³ !” What would a man give, any one of us, who has any real insight into his polluted and miserable state, what would he give to tear away some of the leaves there preserved ! For how heinous are the sins therein written ! Think of the multitude of sins done by us since we first knew the difference between right and wrong. We have forgotten them, but there we might read them clearly recorded. Well may holy David exclaim, “Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgressions, according to Thy mercy remember THOU me.” Conceive, too, the multitude of sins which have so grown into us as to become part of us, and in which we

³ Rev. xx. 12.

now live, not knowing, or but partially knowing, that they are sins; habits of pride, self-reliance, self-conceit, sullenness, impurity, sloth, selfishness, worldliness. The history of all these, their beginnings, and their growth, is recorded in those dreadful books; and when we look forward to the future, how many sins shall we have committed by this time next year,—though we try ever so much to know our duty, and overcome ourselves! Nay, or rather shall we have the opportunity of obeying or disobeying God for a year longer? Who knows whether by that time our account may not be closed for ever?

“Remember me, O LORD, when THOU comest into Thy kingdom⁴.” Such was the prayer of the penitent thief on the cross, such must be our prayer. Who can do us any good, but HE, who shall also be our Judge? When shocking thoughts about ourselves come across us and afflict us, “Remember me,” this is all we have to say. We have “no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom” of our own, to better ourselves withal. We can say nothing to God in defence of ourselves,—we can but acknowledge that we are grievous sinners, and addressing HIM as suppliants, merely beg HIM to bear us in mind in mercy, for His Son’s sake to do us some favour, not according to our deserts, but for the love of CHRIST. The more we try to serve HIM here, the better; but after all, so far do we fall short of what we should be, that if we had but what we are in ourselves to rely upon, wretched are we,—and we are forced out of ourselves by the very necessity of our condition. To whom should we go? Who can do us any good, but HE who was born into this world for our regeneration, was bruised for our iniquities, and rose again for our justification? Though we have served HIM from our youth up, though after His pattern we have grown, as far as mere man can grow, in wisdom as we grew in stature, though we ever have had tender hearts, and a mortified will, and a conscientious temper, and an obedient spirit; yet, at the very best, how much have we left undone, how much done, which ought to be otherwise! What HE can do for our nature, in the way of sanctifying it, we know indeed in a measure; we know, in the case of His saints; and we certainly do not know the limit of

⁴ Luke xxiii. 42.

His carrying forward in objects of His special favour the work of purification, and renewal through His SPIRIT. But for ourselves, we know full well that much as we may have attempted, we have done very little, that our very best service is nothing worth,—and the more we attempt, the more clearly we shall see how little we have hitherto attempted.

Those whom CHRIST saves are they who at once attempt to save themselves, yet despair of saving themselves; who aim to do all, and confess they do nought; who are all love, and all fear; who are the most holy, and yet confess themselves the most sinful; who ever seek to please HIM, yet feel they never can; who are full of good works, yet of works of penance. All this seems a contradiction to the natural man, but it is not so to those whom CHRIST enlightens. They understand in proportion to their illumination, that it is possible to work out their salvation, yet to have it wrought out for them, to fear and tremble at the thought of judgment, yet to rejoice always in the LORD, and hope and pray for His coming.

SERMON CXXX.

RELIGION A WEARINESS TO THE NATURAL MAN.

ISAIAH liii. 2.

“HE hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see HIM, there is no beauty that we should desire HIM.”

“RELIGION is a weariness;” such is the judgment commonly passed, often avowed, concerning the greatest of blessings which ALMIGHTY GOD has bestowed upon us. And when GOD gave the blessing, HE at the same time foretold that such would be the judgment of the world upon it, even as manifested in the gracious Person of HIM whom HE sent to give it to us. “HE hath no form nor comeliness,” says the Prophet, speaking of our LORD and SAVIOUR, “and when we shall see HIM, there is no beauty that we should desire HIM.” HE declared beforehand, that to man His religion would be uninteresting and distasteful. Not that this prediction excuses our deadness to it; this dislike of the religion given us by GOD Himself, seen as it is on all sides of us, —of religion in all its parts, whether its doctrines, its precepts, its polity, its worship, its practical influence,—this distaste for its very name must obviously be an insult to the GIVER. But the text speaks of it as a fact, without commenting on the guilt involved in it; and as such I wish you to consider it, as far as this may be done in reverence and seriousness. Putting aside

for an instant the thought of the ingratitude and the sin which indifference to Christianity implies, let us, as far as we dare, view it merely as a matter of fact, after the manner of the text, and form a judgment on the probable consequences of it. Let us take the state of the case as it is found, and survey it dispassionately, as even an unbeliever might survey it, without at the moment considering whether it is sinful or not; as a misfortune, if we will, or a strange accident, or a necessary condition of our nature,—one of the phenomena, as it may be called, of the present world.

Let me then review human life in some of its stages and conditions, in order to impress upon you the fact of this contrariety between ourselves and our MAKER: HE having one will, we another; HE declaring one thing to be good for us, and we fancying other objects to be our good.

1. "Religion is a weariness;" alas! so feel even children before they can well express their meaning. Exceptions of course now and then occur; and of course children are always more open to religious impressions and visitations than grown persons. They have many good thoughts and good desires, of which, in after life, the multitude of men seem incapable. Yet who, after all, can have a doubt that, in spite of the more intimate presence of God's grace with those who have not yet learned to resist it, still, on the whole, religion is a weariness to children? Consider their amusements, their enjoyments,—what they hope, what they devise, what they scheme, and what they dream about themselves in time future, when they grow up; and say what place religion holds in their hearts. Watch the reluctance with which they turn to religious duties, to saying their prayers, or reading the Bible; and then judge. Observe, as they get older, the influence which the fear of the ridicule of their companions has in deterring them even from speaking of religion, or seeming to be religious. Now the dread of ridicule, indeed, is natural enough; but why should religion inspire ridicule? What is there absurd in thinking of God? Why should we be ashamed of worshipping HIM? It is unaccountable, but it is natural. We may call it an accident, or what we will; still it is an undeniable fact, and that is what I insist upon. I am not forgetful of the peculiar character of children's minds: sensible objects first meet their observation; it is not wonderful that they should at first be inclined to limit their thoughts to things

of sense. A distinct profession of faith, and a conscious maintenance of principle, may imply a strength and consistency of thought to which they are as yet unequal. Again, childhood is capricious, ardent, light hearted; it cannot think deeply or long on any subject. Yet all this is not enough to account for the fact in question—why they should feel this distaste for the very subject of religion. Why should they be ashamed of paying reverence to an unseen, all-powerful God, whose existence they do not disbelieve? Yet they do feel ashamed of it. Is it that they are ashamed of themselves, not of their religion; feeling the inconsistency of professing what they cannot fully practise? This refinement does not materially alter the view of the case; for it is merely their own acknowledgment that they do not love religion as much as they ought. No; we seem compelled to the conclusion, that there is by nature some strange discordance between what we love and what God loves. So much, then, on the state of boyhood.

2. "Religion is a weariness." I will next take the case of young persons when they first enter into life. Here I may appeal to some perhaps who now hear me. Alas! my brethren, is it not so? Is not religion associated in your minds with gloom, melancholy, and weariness? I am not at present going so far as to reprove you with it, though I might well do so; if I did perhaps you might at once turn away, and I wish you calmly to think the matter over, and bear me witness that I state the fact correctly. It is so; you cannot deny it. The very terms "religion," "devotion," "piety," "conscientiousness," "mortification," and the like, you find to be inexpressibly dull and cheerless: you cannot find fault with them, indeed, you would if you could; and whenever the words are explained in particulars and realized, then you do find occasion for exception and objection. But though you cannot deny the claims of religion used as a vague and general term, yet how irksome, cold, uninteresting, uninviting, does it at best appear to you! how severe its voice! how forbidding its aspect! With what animation, on the contrary, do you enter into the mere pursuits of time and the world! What bright anticipations of joy and happiness flit before your eyes! How you are struck and dazzled at the view of the prizes of this life, as they are called! How you admire the elegancies

of art, the brilliance of wealth, or the force of intellect ! According to your opportunities you mix in the world, you meet and converse with persons of various conditions and pursuits, and are engaged in the numberless occurrences of daily life. You are full of news ; you know what this or that person is doing, and what has befallen him ; what has not happened which was near happening ; what may happen. You are full of ideas and feelings upon all that goes on around you. But, from some cause or other, religion has no part, no sensible influence in your judgment of men and things. It is out of your way. Perhaps you have your pleasure parties ; you readily take your share in them time after time ; you pass continuous hours in society where you know that it is quite impossible even to mention the name of religion. Your heart is in scenes and places when conversation on serious subjects is strictly forbidden by the rules of the world's propriety. I do not say we should discourse on religious subjects wherever we go ; I do not say we should make an effort to discourse on them at any time, nor that we are to refrain from society where religion does not lie on the surface of the conversation ; but I do say, that when men find their pleasure and satisfaction lie in society which proscribes religion, and when they deliberately and habitually prefer those amusements which have necessarily nothing to do with religion, such persons cannot view religion as God views it. And this is the point : that the feelings of our hearts on the subject of religion are different from the declared judgment of God ; that we have a natural distaste for that which He has said is our chief good.

3. Now let us pass to the more active occupations of life. Here, too, religion is confessedly felt to be wearisome, it is out of place. The transactions of worldly business, speculations in trade, ambitious hopes, the pursuits of knowledge, the public occurrences of the day, these find a way directly to the heart ; they rouse, they influence. It is superfluous to go about to prove this innate power over us of things of time and sense, to make us think and act. The name of religion, on the other hand, is weak and impotent ; it contains no spell to kindle the feelings of man, to make the heart beat with anxiety, and to produce activity and perseverance. The reason is not merely that men are in want of leisure, and are sustained in a distressing continuance of exertion, by their duties

towards those dependent on them. They have their seasons of relaxation, they turn for a time from their ordinary pursuits ; still religion does not attract them, they find nothing of comfort or satisfaction in it. For a time they allow themselves to be idle. They want an object to employ their minds upon ; they pace to and fro in very want of an object ; yet their duties to God, their future hopes in another state of being, the revelation of God's mercy and will, as contained in Scripture, the news of redemption, the gift of regeneration, the sanctities, the devotional heights, the nobleness and perfection which CHRIST works in His elect, do not suggest themselves as fit subjects to dispel their weariness. Why ? Because religion makes them melancholy, say they, and they wish to relax. Religion is a labour, it is a weariness, a greater weariness than the doing nothing at all. " Wherefore," says Solomon, " is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it ¹ ? "

4. But this natural contrariety between man and his MAKER is still more strikingly shown by the confessions of men of the world who have given some thought to the subject, and viewed society with somewhat of a philosophical spirit. Such men treat the demands of religion with disrespect and negligence, on the grounds of their being unnatural. They say, " It is natural for men to love the world for its own sake ; to be engrossed in its pursuits, and to set their hearts on the rewards of industry, the comforts, luxuries, and pleasures of this life. Man would not be man if he could be made otherwise ; he would not be what he was evidently intended for by his MAKER." Let us pass by the obvious *answer* that might be given to this objection ; it is enough for my purpose that it is *commonly urged*, recognising as it does the fact of the disagreement existing between the claims of God's word, and the inclinations and natural capacities of man. Many, indeed, of those unhappy men who have denied the Christian faith, treat the religious principle altogether as a mere unnatural eccentric state of mind, a peculiar unhappy condition of the affections to which weakness will reduce a man, whether it has been brought on by anxiety, oppressive sorrow, bodily disease, excess of imagination or the like, and temporary or permanent,

¹ Prov. xvii. 16.

according to the circumstances of the disposing cause ; a state to which we all are liable, as we are liable to any mental injury, but unmanly and unworthy of our dignity as rational beings. Here again it is enough for our purpose, that it is allowed by these persons that the love of religion is unnatural and inconsistent with the original condition of our minds.

The same remark may be made upon the notions which secretly prevail in certain quarters at the present day, concerning the unsuitableness of Christianity to an enlightened age. Men there are who look upon the inspired word of God with a sort of indulgence, as if it had its use, and had done service in its day ; that in times of ignorance it awed and controlled fierce barbarians, whom nothing else could have subdued ; but that from its very claim to be Divine and infallible, and its consequent unalterableness, it is an obstacle to the improvement of the human race beyond a certain point, and must ultimately fall before the gradual advancement of mankind in knowledge and virtue. In other words, the literature of the day is weary of revealed religion.

5. Once more ; that religion is in itself a weariness is seen even in the conduct of the better sort of persons, who really on the whole are under the influence of its spirit. So dull and uninviting is calm and practical religion, that religious persons are ever exposed to the temptation of looking out for excitements of one sort or other, to make it pleasurable to them. The spirit of the Gospel is a meek, humble, gentle, unobtrusive spirit. It doth not cry nor lift up its voice in the streets, unless called upon by duty so to do, and then it does it with pain. Display, pretension, conflict, are unpleasant to it. What then is to be thought of persons who are ever on the search after novelties to make religion interesting to them ; who seem to find that Christian activity cannot be kept up without unchristian party-spirit, or Christian conversation without unchristian censoriousness ? Why, this ; that religion is to them as to others, taken by itself, a weariness, and requires something foreign to its own nature to make it palatable. Truly it is a weariness to the natural man to serve God humbly and in obscurity ; it is very wearisome, and very monotonous, to go on day after day watching all we do and think, detecting our secret failings, denying ourselves, creating within us, under God's grace, those parts of the Christian cha-

racter in which we are deficient; wearisome to learn modesty, love of obscurity, willingness to be thought little of, backwardness to clear ourselves when slandered, and readiness to confess when we are wrong; to learn to have no cares for this world, neither to hope nor to fear, but to be resigned and contented!

I may close these remarks, by appealing to the consciences of all who have ever set about the work of religion in good earnest, whoever they may be, whether they have made less, or greater progress in their noble toil, whether they are matured saints, or feeble strugglers against the world and the flesh. They have ever confessed how great efforts were necessary to keep close to the commandments of God; in spite of their knowledge of the truth, and their faith, in spite of the aids and consolations they receive from above, still how often do their corrupt hearts betray them! Even their privileges are often burdensome to them, even to pray for the grace which in CHRIST is pledged to them is an irksome task. They know that God's service is perfect freedom, and they are convinced in their reason, and from their own experience of it, that it is true happiness; still they confess withal the strange reluctance of their natures to love their MAKER and His service. And this is the point in question; not only the mass of mankind, but even the confirmed servants of CHRIST, witness to the opposition which exists between their own nature and the demands of religion.

This then is the remarkable fact which I proposed to show. Can we doubt that man's will runs contrary to God's will—that the view which the inspired word takes of our present life, and of our destiny, does not satisfy us, as it rightly ought to do? that CHRIST hath no form nor comeliness in our eyes; and though we see HIM, we see no desirable beauty in HIM? That holy, merciful, and meek SAVIOUR, the Eternal, the Only-begotten, SON of GOD, our friend and infinite benefactor—HE who left the glory of His FATHER and died for us, who has promised us the overflowing riches of His grace both here and hereafter, HE is a light shining in a dark place, and “the darkness comprehendeth it not.” “Light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.” The nature of men is flesh, and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and ever must so remain; it never can discern, love, accept, the holy doctrines of the Gospel. It will occupy itself in

various ways, it will take interest in things of sense and time, but it can never be religious. It is at enmity with God.

And now we see what must at once follow from what has been said. If our hearts are by nature set on the world for its own sake, and the world is one day to pass away, what are they to be set on, what to delight in, then? Say, how will the soul feel when, stripped of its present attire, which the world bestows, it stands naked and shuddering before the pure, tranquil, and severe majesty of the LORD its God, its most merciful, yet dishonoured MAKER and SAVIOUR? What are to be the pleasures of the soul in another life? Can they be the same as they are here? They cannot; Scripture tells us they cannot; the world passeth away—now what is there left to love and enjoy through a long eternity? What a dark, forlorn, miserable eternity that will be!

It is then plain enough, though Scripture said not a word on the subject, that if we would be happy in the world to come, we must make us new hearts, and begin to love the things we naturally do not love. Viewing it as a practical point, the end of the whole matter is this, we must be changed; for we cannot, we cannot expect the system of the universe to come over to us; the inhabitants of heaven, the numberless creations of Angels, the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble army of Martyrs, the holy Church universal, the Will and Attributes of GOD, these are fixed. We must go over to them. In our SAVIOUR'S own authoritative words: "Verily, verily, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of GOD²." It is a plain matter of self-interest, to turn our thoughts to the means of changing our hearts, putting out of the question our duty towards GOD and CHRIST, our SAVIOUR and REDEEMER.

"HE hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see HIM there is no beauty that we should desire HIM." It is not His loss that we love HIM not, it is our loss. HE is all-blessed, whatever becomes of us. HE is not less blessed because we are far from HIM. It is we who are not blessed, except as we approach HIM, except as we are like HIM, except as we love HIM. Woe unto us, if in the day in which HE comes from heaven we see nothing

² John iii. 3

desirable or gracious in His wounds ; but instead, have made for ourselves an ideal blessedness, different from that which will be manifested to us in HIM. Woe unto us, if we have made pride, or selfishness, or the carnal mind, our standard of perfection and truth ; and our eyes have grown dim, and our hearts gross, as regards the true light of men, and the glory of the Eternal FATHER. May HE HIMSELF save us from our self-delusions, whatever they are, and enable us to give up this world, that we may gain the next ;—and to rejoice in HIM, who had no home of His own, no place to lay His head, who was poor and lowly, and despised and rejected, and tormented and slain.

SERMON CXXXI.

THE WORLD OUR ENEMY.

I JOHN v. 19.

“ We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.”

FEW words are of more frequent occurrence in the language of religion than “ the world ;” Holy Scripture makes continual mention of it, in the way of censure and caution ; in the Service for Baptism it is described as one of three great enemies of our souls ; and in the ordinary writings and conversation of Christians, I need hardly say, mention is made of it continually. Yet most of us, it would appear, have very indistinct notions what the world means. We know that the world is a something dangerous to our spiritual interests, and that it is in some way connected with human society—with men as a mixed multitude, contrasted with men one by one, in private and domestic life ; but what it is, how it is our enemy, how it attacks, and how it is to be avoided, is not so clear. Or if we conceive some distinct notion concerning it, still probably it is a wrong notion ; which leads us, in consequence, to misapply the Scripture precepts relating to the world, and this is even worse than overlooking them. I shall now, then, attempt to show what is meant by the world, and how, in consequence, we are to understand the information and warnings of the sacred writers concerning it.

1. Now, first, by the world is very commonly meant the present visible system of things, without taking into consideration

whether it is good or bad. Thus St. John contrasts the world and the things that are in it, which are evil, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world¹." Again, he presently says, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." Here, as in many other parts of Scripture, the world is not spoken of as actually sinful in itself (though its lusts are so, of course), but merely as some present visible system which is likely to attract us, and is not to be trusted, because it cannot last. Let us first consider it in this point of view.

There is, as a matter of necessity, a great variety of stations and fortunes among mankind; hardly two persons are in the same outward circumstances, and possessed of the same mental resources. Men differ from each other, and are bound together into one body or system by the very points in which they differ; they depend on each other: such is the will of God. This system is the world, to which it is plain belong our various modes of supporting ourselves and families by exertion of mind and body, our intercourse with others, our duty towards others, the social virtues,—industry, honesty, prudence, justice, benevolence, and the like. These spring all from our present lot in life, and tend to our present happiness. This life holds out prizes to merit and exertion. Men rise above their fellows; they gain fame and honours, wealth and power, which we therefore call worldly goods. The affairs of nations, the dealings of people with people, the interchange of productions between country and country, are of this world. We are educated in boyhood for this world; we play our part on a stage more or less conspicuous, as the case may be; we die, we are no more, we are forgotten, as far as the present state of things is concerned: all this is of the world.

By the world, then, is meant this course of things which we see carried on by means of human agency, with all its duties and pursuits. It is not necessarily a sinful system; rather it is framed, as I have said, by God Himself, and therefore cannot be otherwise than good. And yet even thus considering it, we are bid not to love the world: even in this sense the world is an enemy of our souls; and for this reason, because the love of it is dangerous to beings circumstanced as we are; things in them-

¹ 1 John ii. 15.

selves good are not good to us sinners. And this state of things which we see, fair and excellent in itself, is very likely (for the very reason that it is seen, and because the spiritual and future world is not seen) to seduce our wayward hearts from our true and eternal good. As the traveller on serious business may be tempted to linger, while he gazes on the beauty of the prospect which opens on his way, so this well-ordered and divinely-governed world, with all its blessings of sense and knowledge, may lead us to neglect those interests which will endure when itself has passed away. In truth, it promises more than it can fulfil. The goods of life and the applause of men have their excellence, and, as far as they go, are really good ; but they are short-lived. And hence it is that many pursuits in themselves honest and right, are nevertheless to be engaged in with caution, lest they seduce us ; and those perhaps with especial caution, which tend to the well-being of men in this life. The sciences, for instance, of good government, of acquiring wealth, of preventing and relieving want, and the like, are for this reason especially dangerous ; for fixing, as they do, our exertions on this world as an end, they go far to persuade us that they have no other end ; they accustom us to think too much of success in life and temporal prosperity ; nay, they may even teach us to be jealous of religion and its institutions, as if these stood in our way, preventing us from doing so much for the worldly interests of mankind as we might wish.

In this sense it is that St. Paul contrasts sight and faith. We see this world ; we only believe that there is a world of spirits, we do not see it : and inasmuch as sight has more power over us than belief, and the present than the future, so are the occupations and pleasures of this life injurious to our faith. Yet not, I say, in themselves sinful ; as the Jewish system was a temporal system, yet divine, so is the system of nature—this world—divine, though temporal. And as the Jews became carnal-minded even by the influence of their divinely-appointed system, and thereby rejected the SAVIOUR of their souls ; in like manner, men of the world are hardened by God's own good world, into a rejection of CHRIST. In neither case through the fault of the things which are seen, whether miraculous or providential, but accidentally, through the fault of the human heart.

2. But now, secondly, let us proceed to consider the world, not only as dangerous, but as positively sinful, according to the text—"the whole world lieth in wickedness." It was created well in all respects, but even before it as yet had fully grown out into its parts, while as yet the elements of human society did but lie hid in the nature and condition of the first man, Adam fell; and thus the world, with all its social ranks, and aims, and pursuits, and pleasures, and prizes, has ever from its birth been sinful. The infection of sin spread through the whole system, so that although the frame-work is good and divine, the spirit and life within it are evil. Thus, for instance, to be in a high station is the gift of God; but the pride and injustice to which it has given scope is from the Devil. To be poor and obscure is also the ordinance of God; but the dishonesty and discontent which are often seen in the poor is from Satan. To cherish and protect wife and family is God's appointment; but the love of gain, and the low ambition, which lead many a man to exert himself, are sinful. Accordingly, it is said in the text, "The world lieth in wickedness,"—it is plunged and steeped, as it were, in a flood of sin, not a part of it remaining as God originally created it, not a part pure from the corruptions with which Satan has disfigured it.

Look into the history of the world, and what do you read there? Revolutions and changes without number, kingdoms rising and falling; and when without crime? States are established by God's ordinance, they have their existence in the necessity of man's nature; but when was one ever established, nay, or maintained, without war and bloodshed? Of all natural instincts, what is more powerful than that which forbids us to shed our fellows' blood? We shrink with natural horror from the thought of a murderer: yet not a government has ever been settled, or a state acknowledged by its neighbours, without war and the loss of life; nay, more than this, not content with unjustifiable bloodshed, the guilt of which must lie somewhere, instead of lamenting it as a grievous and humiliating evil, the world has chosen to honour the conqueror with its amplest share of admiration. To become a hero, in the eyes of the world, it is almost necessary to break the laws of God and man. Thus the deeds of

the world are matched by the opinions and principles of the world : it adopts bad doctrine to defend bad practice ; it loves darkness because its deeds are evil.

And as the affairs of nations are thus depraved by our corrupt nature, so are all the appointments and gifts of Providence perverted in like manner. What can be more excellent than the vigorous and patient employment of the intellect ; yet in the hands of Satan it gives birth to a proud philosophy. When St. Paul preached, the wise men of the world were, in God's eyes, but fools, for they had used their powers of mind in the cause of error ; their reasonings even led them to be irreligious and immoral ; and they despised the doctrine of a resurrection which they neither loved nor believed. And again, all the more refined arts of life have been disgraced by the vicious tastes of those who excelled in them ; often they have been consecrated to the service of idolatry ; often they have been made the instruments of sensuality and riot. But it would be endless to recount the manifold and complex corruption which man has introduced into the world which God made good ; evil has preoccupied the whole of it, and holds fast its conquest. We know, indeed, that the gracious God revealed HIMSELF to His sinful creatures very soon after Adam's fall. HE showed His will to mankind again and again, and pleaded with them through many ages ; till at length His SON was born into this sinful world in the form of man, and taught us how to please HIM. Still, hitherto the good work has proceeded slowly : such is His pleasure. Evil had the start of good by many days ; it filled the world, it holds it : it has the strength of possession, and it has its strength in the human heart ; for though we cannot keep from approving what is right in our conscience, yet we love and encourage what is wrong ; so that when evil was once set up in the world, it was secured in its seat by the unwillingness with which our hearts relinquish it.

And now I have described what is meant by the sinful world ; that is, the world as corrupted by man, the course of human affairs viewed in its connexion with the principles, opinions, and practices which actually direct it. There is no mistaking these ; they are evil ; and of these it is that St. John says, " If any man love the world, the love of the FATHER is not in him. For all that

is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the FATHER, but is of the world²."

The world then is the enemy of our souls; first, because, however innocent its pleasures, and praiseworthy its pursuits may be, they are likely to engross us, unless we are on our guard: and secondly, because in all its best pleasures, and noblest pursuits, the seeds of sin have been sown; an enemy hath done this; so that it is most difficult to enjoy the good without partaking of the evil also. As an orderly system of various ranks, with various pursuits and their several rewards, it is to be considered not sinful indeed, but dangerous to us. On the other hand, considered in reference to its principles and actual practices, it is really a sinful world. Accordingly, when we are bid in Scripture to shun the world, it is meant that we must be cautious, lest we love what is good in it too well, and lest we love the bad at all. However, there is a mistaken notion sometimes entertained, that the world is some particular set of persons, and that to shun the world is to shun them; as if we could point out, as it were, with the finger, what is the world, and thus could easily rid ourselves of one of our three great enemies. Men, who are beset with this notion, are often great lovers of the world notwithstanding, while they think themselves at a distance from it altogether. They love its pleasures, and they yield to its principles, yet they speak strongly against men of the world, and avoid them. They act the part of superstitious people, who are afraid of seeing evil spirits in what are considered haunted places, while these spirits are busy at their hearts instead, and they do not suspect it.

3. Here then is a question, which it will be well to consider, *viz.* how far the world is a separate body from the Church of God. The two are certainly contrasted in the text, as elsewhere in Scripture. "We know that *we* are of God, and *the whole world* lieth in wickedness." Now the true account of this is, that the Church so far from being literally, and in fact, separate from the wicked world, is within it. The Church is a body, gathered together in the world, and in a process of separation from it. The world's power, alas! is over the Church, because the Church has gone

² 1 John ii. 15, 16.

forth into the world to save the world. All Christians are in the world, and of the world, so far as sin still has dominion over them; and not even the best of us is clean every whit from sin. Though then, in our idea of them, and in their principles, and in their future prospects, the Church is one thing, and the world is another, yet in present matter of fact, the Church is of the world, not separate from it; for the grace of God has but partial possession even of religious men; and the best that can be said of us is, that we have two sides, a light side and a dark, and that the dark happens to be the outermost. Thus we form part of the world to each other, though we be not of the world. Even supposing there were a society of men influenced individually by Christian motives, still this society, viewed as a whole, would be a worldly one; I mean a society holding and maintaining many errors, and countenancing many bad practices. Evil ever floats at the top. And if we inquire why it is that the good in Christians is seen less than the bad? I answer, first, because there is less of it; and secondly, because evil forces itself upon general notice, and good does not. So that in a large body of men, each contributing his portion, evil displays itself on the whole conspicuously, and in all its diversified shapes. And thirdly, from the nature of things, the soul cannot be understood by any but God, and a religious spirit is in St. Peter's words, "the hidden man of the heart." It is only the actions of others which we see for the most part, and since there are numberless ways of doing wrong, and but one of doing right, and numberless ways too of regarding and judging the conduct of others, no wonder that even the better sort of men, much more the generality, are, and seem to be, so sinful. God only sees the circumstances under which a man acts, and why he acts in this way and not in that. God only sees perfectly the train of thought which preceded his action, the motive, and the reasons. And God alone (if ought is ill done, or sinfully) sees the deep contrition afterwards, the habitual lowliness, then bursting forth into special self-reproach, and the meek faith casting itself wholly upon God's mercy. Think for a moment, how many hours in the day every man is left wholly to himself and his God, or rather how few minutes he is in intercourse with others—consider this, and you will perceive how it is that the life of the Church is hid with God, and

how it is that the outward conduct of the Church must necessarily look like the world, even far more than it really is like it, and how vain, in consequence, the attempt is (which some make) of separating the world distinctly from the Church. Consider, moreover, how much there is, while we are in the body, to stand in the way of one mind communicating with another. We are imprisoned in the body, and our intercourse is by means of words, which feebly represent our real feelings. Hence the best motives and truest opinions are misunderstood, and the most sound rules of conduct misapplied by others. And Christians are necessarily more or less strange to each other; nay, and as far as the appearance of things is concerned, almost mislead each other, and are, as I have said, the world one to another. It is long, indeed, before we become at all acquainted with each other, and we appear the one to the other cold, or harsh, or capricious, or self-willed, when we are not so. So that it unhappily comes to pass, that even good men retire from each other into themselves, and to their God, as if retreating from the rude world.

And if all this takes place in the case of the better sort of men, how much more will it happen in the case of those multitudes who are still unstable in faith and obedience, half Christians, not having yet wrought themselves into any consistent shape of opinion and practice! These, so far from showing the better part of themselves, often affect to be worse even than they are. Though they have secret fears and misgivings, and God's grace pleads with their conscience, and seasons of seriousness follow, yet they are ashamed to confess to each other their own seriousness, and they ridicule religious men lest they should be themselves ridiculed.

And thus, on the whole, the state of the case is as follows: that if we look through mankind in order to find out who make up the world, and who do not, we shall find none who are not of the world; inasmuch as there are none who are not exposed to infirmity. So that if to shun the world is to shun some body of men so called, we must shun all men, nay, ourselves too—which is a conclusion which means nothing at all.

But let us, avoiding all refinements which lead to a display of words only, not to the improvement of our hearts and conduct, let us set to work practically; and instead of attempting to judge

of mankind on a large scale, and to settle deep questions, let us take what is close at hand and concerns ourselves, and make use of such knowledge as we can obtain. Are we tempted to neglect the worship of God for some temporal object? this is of the world, and not to be admitted. Are we ridiculed for our conscientious conduct? this again is a trial of the world, and to be withstood. Are we tempted to give too much time to our recreations; to be idling when we should be working; reading or talking when we should be busy in our temporal calling; hoping for impossibilities; or fancying ourselves in some different state of life from our own; over anxious of the good opinion of others; bent upon getting the credit of industry, honesty, and prudence? all these are temptations of this world. Are we discontented with our lot, or are we over attached to it, and fretful and desponding when God recalls the good HE has given? this is to be worldly-minded.

Look not about for the world as some vast and gigantic evil far off—its temptations are close to you, apt and ready, suddenly made and subtle in their address. Try to bring down the words of Scripture to common life, and to recognise the evil in which this world lies, in your own hearts.

When our SAVIOUR comes, HE will destroy this world, even His own work, and much more the lusts of the world, which are of the evil one; then at length we must lose the world, even if we cannot bring ourselves to part with it now. And we shall perish with the world, if on that day its lusts are found within us. “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

SERMON CXXXII.

THE PRAISE OF MEN.

JOHN xii. 43.

“They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

THIS is spoken of the chief rulers of the Jews, who, though they believed in CHRIST's divine mission, were afraid to confess HIM, lest they should incur temporal loss and shame from the Pharisees. The censure passed by St. John on these persons is too often applicable to Christians at the present day : perhaps, indeed, there is no one among us who has not at some time or other fallen under it. We love the good opinion of the world more than the approbation of HIM who created us, redeemed us, has regenerated us, and who still preserves to us the opportunity of preparing ourselves for His future presence. Such is too often the case with us. It is well we should be aware that it is so ; it is well we should dwell upon it, and that we should understand and feel that it is wrong, which many men do not.

Now it is an obvious question, Why is it wrong to love the praise of men ? For it may be objected, that we are accustomed to educate the young by means of praise and blame ; that we encourage them by kind words *from us*, that is, from man ; and punish them for disobedience. If then, it may be argued, it is right to regard the opinions of others concerning us in our youth, it cannot be in itself wrong to pay attention to it at any other period of life. This is true ; but I do not say that the mere love of praise and fear of shame are evil : regard to the corrupt world's

praise or blame, this is what is sinful and dangerous. St. John, in the text, implies that the praise of men was, at the time spoken of, in opposition to the praise of God. It *must* be wrong to prefer any thing to the will of God. To seek praise is in itself as little wrong, as it is wrong to hope, and to fear, and to love, and to trust ; all depends upon the object hoped, or feared, or loved, or trusted : to seek the praise of good men is not wrong, any more than to love or to reverence good men ; only wrong when it is in excess, when it interferes with the exercise of love and reverence towards God. Not wrong while we look on good men singly as instruments and servants of God ; or, in the words of Scripture, while “ we glorify God in them ¹.” But to seek the praise of bad men, is in itself as wrong as to love the company of bad men, or to admire them. It is not, I say, merely the love of praise, that is a sin, but love of the corrupt world’s praise. This is the case with all our natural feelings and affections ; they are all in themselves good, and implanted by God ; they are sinful, because we have in us by nature a something more than them, *viz.* an evil principle which perverts them to a bad end. Adam, before his fall, felt, we may suppose, love, fear, hope, joy, dislike, as we do now ; but then he felt them only when he ought, and as he ought ; all was harmoniously attuned and rightly adjusted in his soul, which was at unity with itself. But, at the fall, this beautiful order and peace were broken up ; the same passions remained, but their use and action were changed ; they rushed into extremes, sometimes excessive, sometimes the reverse. Indignation was corrupted into wrath, self-love became selfishness, self-respect became pride, and emulation envy and jealousy. They were at variance with each other ; pride struggled with self-interest, fear with desire. Thus his soul became a chaos, and needed a new creation. Moreover, as I have said, his affections were set upon improper objects. The natural man looks to this world, the world is his god ; faith, love, hope, joy, are not excited in his mind by things spiritual and divine, but by things seen and temporal.

Considering, then, that love of praise is not a bad principle in itself, it is plain that a parent may very properly teach his

¹ Galatians i. 24.

child to love his praise, and fear his blame, when that praise and blame are given in accordance with God's praise and blame, and made subservient to them. And, in like manner, if the world at large took a correct and religious view of things, then its praise and blame would in its place be valuable too. Did the world admire what God admires; did it account humility, for instance, a great virtue, and pride a great sin; did it condemn that spirit of self-importance and sensitiveness of disgrace, which calls itself a love of honour; did it think little of temporal prosperity, wealth, rank, grandeur, and power; did it condemn arrogant and irreverent disputing, the noisy, turbulent spirit of ambition, the love of war and conquest, and the perverse temper which leads to jealousy and hatred; did it prefer goodness and truth to gifts of the intellect, did it think little of quickness, wit, shrewdness, power of speech and general acquirements, and much of patience, meekness, gentleness, firmness, faith, conscientiousness, purity, forgiveness of injuries; then there would be no sin in our seeking the world's praise; and though we still ought to love God's praise above all, yet we might love the praise of the world in its degree, for it would be nothing more nor less than the praise of good men. But since, alas! the contrary is the case, since the world (as Scripture tells us) "lieth in wickedness," and the principles and practices which prevail on all sides of us are not those which the All-holy God sanctions, we cannot lawfully seek the world's praise. We cannot serve two masters who are enemies the one to the other. We are forbidden to love the world or any thing that is of the world; for it is not of the FATHER, but passeth away,

This is the reason why it is wrong to pursue the world's praise; *viz.* because we cannot have it and God's praise too. And yet, as it is wrong, so is it common,—for this reason: because God is unseen, and the world is seen; because God's praise and blame are future, the world's are present; because God's praise and blame are inward, and come quietly and without keenness, whereas the world's are very plain and intelligible, and make themselves felt.

Take, for instance, the case of the young on (what is called) entering into life. Very many, indeed, there are, whether in a higher or lower station, who enter into the mixed society of

others early ; so early, that it might be thought they had hardly had time to acquire any previous knowledge of right and wrong, any standard of right and wrong, other than the world gives, any principles by which to fight against the world. And yet it cannot quite be so. Whatever is the first time persons hear evil, it is quite certain that good has been beforehand with them, and they have a something within them which tells them it is evil. And much more, if they have been blessed, as most men are, with the protection of parents, or the kind offices of teachers or of God's ministers ; they generally have principles of duty more or less strongly imprinted on their minds ; and on their first intercourse with strangers they are shocked or frightened at seeing the improprieties and sins, which are openly countenanced. Alas ! there are persons, doubtless, (though God forbid it should be the case with any here present !) whose consciences have been so early trained into forgetfulness of religious duties, that they can hardly, or cannot at all, recollect the time I speak of ; the time when they acted with the secret feeling that God saw them, saw all they did and thought. I will not fancy this to be the case with any who hear me. Rather, there are many of you, in different ranks and circumstances, who have, and ever have had, general impressions on your minds of the claims which religion has on you, but, at the same time, are afraid of acting upon them, afraid of the opinion of the world, of what others would say if you set about obeying your conscience. Ridicule is a most powerful instrument in the hands of Satan, and it is most vividly felt by the young. If any one wishes to do his duty, it is most easy for the cold, the heartless, and the thoughtless, to find out harsh, or provoking, or ridiculous names to fix upon him. My brethren, so many of you as are sensitive of the laughter or contempt of the world, this is your cross ; you must wear it, you must endure it patiently ; it is the mark of your conformity to CHRIST ; HE despised the shame : you must learn to endure it, from the example and by the aid of your SAVIOUR. You must love the praise of God more than the praise of men. It is the very trial suited to you, appointed for you, to establish you in the faith. You are not tempted with gain or ambition, but with ridicule. And be sure, that unless you withstand it, you cannot endure hardships as good soldiers of JESUS CHRIST, you will not

endure other temptations which are to follow. How can you advance a step in your after and more extended course till the first difficulty is overcome? You need faith, and "a double-minded man," says St. James, "is unstable in all his ways." Moreover, be not too sure that all who show an inclination to ridicule you, feel exactly as they say. They speak with the loudest speaker; speak you boldly, and they will speak with you. They have very little of definite opinion themselves, or probably they even feel with you, though they speak against you. Very likely they have uneasy, unsatisfied consciences, though they seem to sin so boldly; and are as afraid of the world as you can be, nay, more so; they join in ridiculing you, lest others should ridicule them; or they do so in a sort of self-defence against the reproaches of their own consciences. Numbers in this bad world talk loudly against religion in order to encourage each other in sin, because they need encouragement. They are cowards, and rely on each other for support against their fears. They know they ought to be other than they are, but are glad to avail themselves of any thing that looks like argument, to overcome their consciences withal. And ridicule is a kind of argument,—such as it is; and numbers ridiculing together are a still stronger one—of the same kind. Any how, there are few indeed who will not feel afterwards, in times of depression or alarm, that you are right, and they themselves are wrong. Those who serve God faithfully have a friend of their own, in each man's bosom, witnessing for them; even in those who treat them ill. And I suppose no young person has been able, through God's mercy, to withstand the world's displeasure, but has felt at this time or that, that this is so, and in a little time will, with all humility, have the comfort of feeling it while he is withstanding the world.

But now supposing he has not had strength of mind to withstand the world; but has gone the way of the world. Suppose he has joined the multitude in saying and doing what he should not. We know the careless, thoughtless, profane habits which most men live in, making light of serious subjects, and being ashamed of godliness and virtue; ashamed of going to church regularly, ashamed of faith, ashamed of chastity, ashamed of innocence, ashamed of obedience to persons in authority. Supposing a person has been one of these, and then through God's grace repents. It often

pleases God, in the course of His Providence, to rouse men to reflection by the occurrences of life. In such circumstances they certainly will have a severe trial to stand against the world. Nothing is more painful in the case of such persons, than the necessity often imposed upon them of acting contrary to the opinion and wishes of those with whom they have till now been intimate,—whom they have admired and followed. Intimacies have already been formed, and ties drawn tight, which it is difficult to sever. What is the person in question to do? rudely to break them at once? no. But is he to share in sins in which he formerly took part? no; whatever censure, contempt, or ridicule attaches to him in consequence. But what, then, is he to do? His task, I say, is painful and difficult, but he must not complain, for it is his own making; it is the natural consequence of his past neglect of God. So much is plain,—he must abstain from all sinful actions; not converse lightly or irreverently where formerly he was not unwilling so to do; not spend his time, as heretofore, in idleness or riot; avoid places, whither he is not called by actual duty,^f which offer temptation to sin; observe diligently attendance on church; not idle away the Lord's Day in vanity, or worse; not add to the number of his acquaintance any thoughtless persons. All this is quite plain, and in doing this I know he will incur the ridicule of his companions. He will have much to bear. He must bear to be called names, to be thought a hypocrite, to be thought to be affecting something out of the way, to be thought desirous of recommending himself to this or that person. He must be prepared for malicious and untrue reports about himself; many other trials must he look for. They are his portion. He must pray God to enable him to bear them meekly. He must pray for himself, he must pray for those who ridicule him. He has deserved ridicule. He has nothing to boast of, if he bears it well. He has nothing to boast of that he incurs it. He has nothing to boast of, as if he were so much better than those who ridicule him; he was once as they are now. He is now just a little better than they were. He has just begun a new life. He has got a very little way in it, or rather no way, nothing beyond professing it; and he has the reproach of the world in consequence of his profession. Well, let him see to it that this reproach is not in vain, that he has a

right to the reproach. Let him see to it that he acts as well as professes. It will be miserable indeed if he incurs the reproach, and yet does not gain the reward. Let him pray God to perfect in him what HE has begun in him, and to begin and perfect it also in all those that reproach him. Let him pray for CHRIST's grace to bear hardships in CHRIST's spirit; to be able to look calmly in the world's face, and bear its frown; to trust in the LORD, and be doing good; to obey GOD, and so to be reproached, not for professing only, but for performing, not for doing nothing, but for doing something, and in GOD's cause. If we *are* under reproach, let us have something to show for it. At present, such a one is but a child in the Gospel; but in time, St. Peter's words will belong to him, and he may appropriate them. "This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience towards GOD endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with GOD."

What happens to the young in one way, and to penitent sinners in another, happens in one way or other to all of us. In the case of all of us occasions arise, when practices countenanced by others do not approve themselves to our consciences. If after serious thought we find we cannot acquiesce in them, we must follow our consciences, and stand prepared for the censure of others. We must submit (should it be unavoidable) to appear to those who have no means of understanding us, self-willed, or self-conceited, or obstinate, or eccentric, or headstrong, praying the while that GOD's mercy may vouchsafe to us, that we be not really what we seem to the world.

Some are exposed to a temptation of a different kind, that of seeming more religious than they really are. It may happen, that to advocate certain right opinions may be profitable to our worldly interests, and be attended by the praise of men. It may be asked, since in such cases GOD and man approve the same thing, why should the applause of the world be accounted dangerous then? I answer, it is dangerous because GOD requires of us a modest silence in our religion; but we cannot be religious in the eyes of men without displaying religion. I am now speaking of display. GOD sees our thoughts without our help, and praises

them ; but we cannot be praised by men without being seen by men : whereas often the very excellence of a religious action, according to our SAVIOUR's precept, consists in the not being seen by others. This is a frequent cause of hypocrisy in religion. Men begin by feeling as they should feel, then they think it a very hard thing that men should not know how well they feel, and in course of time they learn to speak without feeling. Thus they have learned to "love the praise of men more than the praise of God."—We have to guard against another danger, against the mistake of supposing that the world's despising us is a proof that we are particularly religious ; for this, too, is often supposed. Frequently it happens that we encumber our religion with extravagances, perversions, or mistakes, with which religion itself has no necessary connexion, and these, and not religion, excite the contempt of the world. So much is this the case, that the censure of numbers, or of the sober-minded, or of various and distinct classes of men, or censure consistently urged, or continued consistently, ought always to lead a man to be very watchful as to what he considers right to say or do in the line of duty, to lead him to examine his principles ; to lead him, however thoroughly he adheres to these after all, to be unaffectedly humble about himself, and to convince him in matter of fact, (what he might be quite sure of beforehand, from the nature of the case,) that, however good his principles are in themselves, he is mixing up with them the alloy of his own frail and corrupt nature.

In conclusion, I would say to those who fear the world's censure, this :—

1. Recollect you cannot please all parties, you must disagree with some or other ; you have only to choose (if you are determined to look to man) with which you will disagree. And, further, you may be sure that those who attempt to please all parties, please fewest ; and that the best way to gain the world's good opinion (even if you were set upon this, which you must not be,) is to show that you prefer the praise of God. Make up your mind to be occasionally misunderstood, and undeservedly condemned. You must, in the Apostle's words, go through evil report, and good report, whether on a contracted or a wider field of action. And you must not be anxious even for the praise of good men. To have, indeed, the approbation of those whose

hearts are guided by God's HOLY SPIRIT, is indeed much to be coveted. Still this is a world of discipline, not of enjoyment; and just as we are sometimes bound in duty to abstain from indulgences of sense in themselves innocent, so are we sometimes bound to deny ourselves the satisfaction derived from the praise even of the religious and conscientious. Only let us beware in all this, lest we act from pride and self-conceit.

2. In the next place, think of the multitude of beings, who, unseen themselves, may yet be surveying our conduct. St. Paul charges Timothy by the elect Angels²; and elsewhere he declares that the Apostles were made "a spectacle unto the world, and to Angels, and to men³." Are we then afraid to follow what is right, lest the world should scoff? rather let us be afraid not to follow it, because God sees us, and CHRIST, and the holy Angels. They rejoice over one sinner that repenteth; how must they mourn over those who fall away! What interest, surely, is excited among them, by the sight of the Christian's trial, when faith and the desire of the world's esteem are struggling in his heart for victory! what rejoicing if, through the grace of God, he overcomes! what sorrow and pity if he is overcome by the world! Accustom yourselves, then, to feel that you are on a public stage, whatever your station of life may be; that there are other witnesses to your conduct besides the world around you; and, if you feel shame of men, you should much more feel shame in the presence of God, and those servants of His that do His pleasure.

3. Still further: you fear the judgment of men upon you. What will you think of it on your deathbed? The hour must come, sooner or later, when your soul is to return to HIM who gave it. Perhaps you will be sensible of your awful state. What will you then think of the esteem of the world? will not all below seem to pass away, and be rolled up as a scroll, and the extended regions of the future solemnly set themselves before you? Then how vain will appear the applause or blame of creatures, such as we are, all sinners and blind judges, and feeble aids, and themselves destined to be judged for their deeds. When, then, you are tempted to dread the ridicule of man, throw your mind forward to the hour of death. You know what you will then think of it, if you are then able to think at all.

² 1 Tim. v. 21.

³ 1 Cor. iv. 9.

4. The subject is not exhausted. You fear shame; well, and will you not shrink from shame at the judgment-seat of CHRIST? There will be assembled all the myriads of men who ever lived, a vast multitude! There will be Apostles, prophets, martyrs, and all saints from the beginning of time. There will be all the good men you ever heard of, or knew. There will be your own kindest and best friends, your pious parents, or brothers, or children. Now what think you of being put to shame before all these? You fear the contempt of one small circle of men; what think you of the Saints of GOD, of St. Mary, of St. Peter and St. Paul, of the ten thousand generations of mankind, being witnesses of your disgrace? You dread the opinion of those whom you do not love; but what if a father then shrink from a dear son, or the wife, or husband, your earthly companion, then tremble at the sight of you, and feel ashamed of you? Nay, there is One greater than parents, husbands, or brothers; One of whom you have been ashamed on earth; and what will HE, that merciful, but neglected SAVIOUR, think of you then? Hear His own words:—"Whosoever shall be ashamed of ME and of My words, of him shall the SON of Man be ashamed, when HE shall come in His own glory, and in His FATHER'S, and of the holy Angels." Then such unhappy men, how will they feel shame at themselves! they will despise and loathe themselves; they will hate and abominate their own folly; they will account themselves brutish and mad, so to have been beguiled by the devil, and to have trifled with the season of mercy. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth," says Daniel, "shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

Let us, then, rouse ourselves, and turn from man to GOD; what have we to do with the world, who from our infancy have been put on our journey heavenward? Take up your cross and follow CHRIST. HE went through shame far greater than can be yours. Do you think HE felt nothing when HE was lifted up on the Cross to public gaze, amid the contempt and barbarous triumphings of His enemies, the Pharisees, Pilate and his Roman guard, Herod and his men of war, and the vast multitude collected from all parts of the world? They all looked on HIM with hatred and insult; yet HE endured, (we are told,) "despising the

shame⁴." It is a high privilege to be allowed to be conformed to CHRIST; St. Paul thought it so, so have all good men. The whole Church of GOD, from the days of CHRIST to the present, has been ever held in shame and contempt by men of this world. Proud men have reasoned against its Divine origin; crafty men have attempted to degrade it to political purposes: still it has lasted for many centuries; it will last still, through the promised help of GOD the HOLY GHOST; and that same promise which is made to it first as a body, is assuredly made also to every one of us who seeks grace of GOD through it. The grace of our LORD and SAVIOUR is pledged to every one of us without measure, to give us all necessary strength and holiness when we pray for it; and ALMIGHTY GOD tells us HIMSELF, "Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but My righteousness shall be for ever, and My salvation from generation to generation."

⁴ Heb. xii. 2.

SERMON CXXXIII.

TEMPORAL ADVANTAGES.

1 TIMOTHY vi. 7, 8.

“ We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.”

EVERY age has its own special sins and temptations. Impatience with their lot, murmuring, grudging, unthankfulness, discontent, are sins common to men at all times ; but I suppose one of those which belongs to our age more than to another, is desire of a greater portion of worldly goods than God has given us,—ambition and covetousness in one shape or another. This is an age and country in which, more than in any other, men have the opportunity of what is called rising in life,—of changing from a lower to a higher class of society, of gaining wealth ; and upon wealth all things follow,—consideration, credit, influence, power, enjoyment, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Since, then, men now-a-days have so often the opportunity of gaining worldly goods which they had not, it is not wonderful they should be tempted to gain them ; nor wonderful that when they have gained them, they should set their heart upon them.

And it will often happen, that from coveting them before they are gained, and from making much of them when they are gained, men will be led to take unlawful means, whether to gain them, or not to lose them. But I am not going so far as to suppose the case of dishonesty, fraud, double-dealing, injustice, or the like :

to these St. Paul seems to allude when he goes on to say, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare;" again, "The love of money is the root of all evil." But let us confine ourselves to the consideration of the nature itself, and the natural effects, of these worldly things, without extending our view to those further evils to which they may give occasion. St. Paul says in the text, that we ought to be content with food and raiment; and the wise man says, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me¹." And our LORD would have us "take no thought for the morrow;" which surely is a dissuasion from aggrandizing ourselves, accumulating wealth, or aiming at distinction. And HE has taught us when we pray to say, "Give us this day our *daily* bread." Yet a great number of persons, I may say nearly all men, are not content with enough, they are not satisfied with sufficiency; they wish for something more than simplicity, and plainness, and gravity, and modesty, in their mode of living; they like show and splendour, and admiration from the many, and obsequiousness on the part of those who have to do with them, and the ability to do as they will; they like to attract the eye, to be received with consideration and respect, to be heard with deference, to be obeyed with promptitude; they love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats; they like to be well dressed, and to have titles of honour. Now, then, I will attempt to show that these gifts of the world which men seek are not to be reckoned good things; that they are ill suited to our nature and our present state, and are dangerous to us; that it is on the whole best for our prospects of happiness even here, not to say hereafter, that we should be without them.

Now, first, that these worldly advantages, as they are called, are not productive of any great enjoyment even now to the persons possessing them, it does not require many words to prove. I might indeed maintain, with no slight show of reason, that these things, so far from increasing happiness, are generally the source of much disquietude; that as a person has more wealth, or more power, or more distinction, his cares generally increase, and his time is less his own: thus, in the words of the preacher, "the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to

¹ Prov. xxx. 8.

sleep," and, "in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow²." But however this may be, at least these outward advantages do not increase our happiness. Let me ask any one who has succeeded in any object of his desire, has he experienced in his success that full, that lasting satisfaction which he anticipated? Did not some feeling of disappointment, of weariness, of satiety, of disquietude, after a short time, steal over his mind? I think it did; and if so, what reason has he to suppose that that greater share of reputation, opulence, and influence which he has not, and which he desires, would, if granted him, suffice to make him happy? No; the fact is certain, however slow and unwilling we may be to believe it, none of these things bring the pleasure which we beforehand suppose they will bring. Watch narrowly the persons who possess them, and you will at length discover the same uneasiness and occasional restlessness which others have; you will find that there is just a something beyond, which they are striving after, or just some one thing which annoys and distresses them. The good things you admire please for the most part only while they are new: now those who have them are accustomed to them, so they care little for them, and find no alleviation in them for the anxieties and cares which still remain. It is fine, in prospect and imagination, to be looked up to, admired, applauded, courted, feared, to have a name among men, to rule their opinions or their actions by our word, to create a stir by our movements, while men cry, "Bow the knee," before us; but none knows so well how vain is the world's praise, as he who has it. And why is this? It is, in a word, because the soul was made for religious employments and pleasures; and hence, that no temporal blessings, however exalted or refined, can satisfy it. As well might we attempt to sustain the body on chaff, as to feed and nourish the immortal soul with the pleasures and occupations of the world.

Only thus much, then, shall I say on the point of worldly advantages not bringing present happiness. But next, let us consider that, rather, they are positively dangerous to our eternal interests.

Many of these things, if they did no other harm, at least are

² Eccles. i. 18.

injurious to our souls, by taking up the time which might else be given to religion. Much intercourse with the world, which eminence and station render a duty, has a tendency to draw off the mind from God, and deaden it to the force of religious motives and considerations. There is a want of sympathy between much business and calm devotion, great splendour and a simple faith, which will be to no one more painful than to the Christian, to whom God has assigned some post of especial responsibility or distinction. To maintain a religious spirit in the midst of engagements and excitements of this world is possible only to a saint; nay, the case is the same though our business be one of a charitable and religious nature, and though our chief intercourse is with those whom we believe to have their minds set upon religion, and whose principles and conduct are not likely to withdraw our feet from the narrow way of life. For here we are likely to be deceived from the very circumstance that our employments are religious; and our end, as being a right one, will engross us, and continually tempt us to be inattentive to the means, and the spirit in which we pursue it. Our Lord alludes to the danger of multiplied occupations in the Parable of the Sower: "He that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."

Again, these worldly advantages, as they are called, will seduce us into an excessive love of them. We are too well inclined by nature to live by sight, rather than by faith; and besides the immediate enjoyment, there is something so agreeable to our natural tastes in the honours and emoluments of the world, that it requires an especially strong mind, and a large measure of grace, not to be gradually corrupted by them. We are led to set our hearts upon them, and in the same degree to withdraw them from God. We become unwilling to leave this visible state of things, and to be left on a level with those multitudes who are at present inferior to ourselves. Prosperity is sufficient to seduce, although not to satisfy. Hence death and judgment are unwelcome subjects of reflection to the rich and powerful; for death takes from them those comforts which habit has made necessary to them, and throws them adrift on a new order of things, of

which they know nothing, save that in it there is no respect of persons.

And as these goods lead us to love the world, so again do they lead us to trust in the world : we not only become worldly-minded, but unbelieving ; our wills becoming corrupt, our understandings also become dark, and disliking the truth, we gradually learn to maintain and defend error. St. Paul speaks of those who "having put away a good conscience, concerning faith made shipwreck³." Familiarity with this world makes men discontented with the doctrine of the narrow way ; they fall into heresies, and attempt to attain salvation on easier terms than those which CHRIST holds out to us. In a variety of ways this love of the world operates. Men's opinions are imperceptibly formed by their wishes. If, for instance, we see our worldly prospects depend, humanly speaking, upon a certain person, we are led to court him, to honour him, and adopt his views, and trust in an arm of flesh, till we forget the overruling power of God's providence, and the necessity of His blessing, for the building of the house and the keeping of the city.

And moreover, these temporal advantages, as they are considered, have a strong tendency to render us self-confident. When a man has been advanced in the world by means of his own industry and skill, when he began poor and ends rich, how apt will he be to pride himself, and confide, in his own contrivances and his own resources ! Or when a man feels himself possessed of good abilities ; of quickness in entering into a subject, or of powers of argument to discourse readily upon it, or of acuteness to detect fallacies in dispute with little effort, or of a delicate and cultivated taste, so as to separate with precision the correct and beautiful in thought and feeling from the faulty and irregular, how will such an one be tempted to self-complacency and self-approbation ! how apt will he be to rely upon himself, to rest contented with himself ; to be harsh and impetuous ; or supercilious ; or to be fastidious, indolent, unpractical ; and to despise the pure, self-denying, humble temper of religion, as something irrational, dull, enthusiastic, or needlessly rigorous !

³ 1 Tim. i. 19.

These considerations on the extreme danger of possessing temporal advantages, will be greatly strengthened by considering the conduct of holy men when gifted with them. Take, for instance, Hezekiah, one of the best of the Jewish kings. He, too, had been schooled by occurrences which one might have thought would have beaten down all pride and self-esteem. The king of Assyria had come against him, and seemed prepared to overwhelm him with his hosts; and he had found his God a mighty Deliverer, cutting off in one night of the enemy an hundred fourscore and five thousand men. And again, he had been miraculously recovered from sickness, when the sun's shadow turned ten degrees back, to convince him of the certainty of the promised recovery. Yet when the king of Babylon sent ambassadors to congratulate him on this recovery, we find this holy man ostentatiously displaying to them his silver, and gold, and armour. Truly the heart is "deceitful above all things;" and it was, indeed, to manifest this more fully that God permitted him thus to act. God "left him," says the inspired writer, "to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart⁴." Let us take David as another instance of the great danger of prosperity; he, too, will exemplify the unsatisfactory nature of temporal goods: for which, think you, was the happier, the lowly shepherd or the king of Israel? Observe his simple reliance on God and his composure, when advancing against Goliath: "The Lord," he says, "that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine⁵." And compare this with his grievous sins, his continual errors, his weaknesses, inconsistencies, and then his troubles and mortifications after coming to the throne of Israel; and who will not say that his advancement was the occasion of both sorrow and sin, which, humanly speaking, he would have escaped, had he died amid the sheepfolds of Jesse? He was indeed most wonderfully sustained by Divine grace, and died in the fear of God; yet what right-minded and consistent Christian but must shrink from the bare notion of possessing a worldly greatness so corrupting and seducing as David's kingly power was shown to be in the instance of so great a Saint? The case of Solomon is still more striking;

⁴ 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

⁵ 1 Sam. xvii. 37.

his falling away even surpasses our anticipation of what our SAVIOUR calls "the deceitfulness of riches." He may indeed, for what is known, have repented; but at least the history tells us nothing of it. All we are told is, that "King Solomon loved many strange women . . . and it came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtaroth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites⁶." Yet this was he who had offered up that most sublime and affecting prayer at the Dedication of the Temple, and who, on a former occasion, when the ALMIGHTY gave him the choice of any blessing he should ask, had preferred an understanding heart to long life, and honour, and riches.

So dangerous, indeed, is the possession of the goods of this world, that to judge from the Scripture history, seldom has God given unmixed prosperity to any one whom HE loves. "Blessed is the man," says the Psalmist, "whom THOU chastenest, and teachest him out of Thy law⁷." Even the best men require some pain or grief to sober them and keep their hearts right. Thus, to take the example of St. Paul himself, even his labours, sufferings, and anxieties, he tells us, would not have been sufficient to keep him from being exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, unless there had been added some further cross, some "thorn in the flesh⁸," as he terms it, some secret affliction, of which we are not particularly informed, to humble him, and to keep him in a sense of his weak and dependent condition.

The history of the Church after him affords us an additional lesson of the same serious truth. For three centuries it was exposed to heathen persecution; during that long period God's Hand was upon His people: what did they do when that Hand was taken off? How did they act when the world was thrown open to them, and the saints possessed the high places of the earth? did they enjoy it? far from it, they shrank from that, which they might, had they chosen, have made much of; they denied themselves what was set before them; when God's Hand was removed, their own hand was heavy upon them. Wealth, honour, and power, they put away from them. They recollected

⁶ 1 Kings xi. 1. 4, 5.

⁷ Psalm xciv. 12.

⁸ 2 Cor. xii. 7.

our LORD's words, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God⁹!" And St. James, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom¹?" For three centuries they had no need to think of those words, for CHRIST remembered them, and kept them humble; but when he left them to themselves, then they did voluntarily what they had hitherto suffered patiently. They were resolved that the Gospel character of a Christian should be theirs. Still, CHRIST, in the Gospels, makes His followers poor and weak, and lowly and simple-minded; men of plain lives, men of prayer, not "faring sumptuously," or clad in "soft raiment," or "taking thought for the morrow." They recollected what HE said to the young Ruler, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow ME." And so they put off their "gay clothing," their "gold, and pearls, and costly array;" they "sold that they had, and gave alms;" they "washed one another's feet;" they "had all things common." They formed themselves into communities for prayer and praise, for labour and study, for the care of the poor, for mutual edification, and preparation for CHRIST; and thus, as soon as the world professed to be Christian, Christians at once set up among them a witness against the world, and kings and monks came into the Church together. And from that time to this, never has the union of Church with State prospered, but when she was united also with the hermitage and the cell.

Moreover, in those religious ages, Christians avoided greatness in the Church as well as in the world. They would not accept rank and station on account of their spiritual peril, when they were no longer encompassed by temporal trials. When they were elected to the episcopate, when they were exhorted to the priesthood, they fled away and hid themselves. They recollected our LORD's words, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant;" and again, "Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even CHRIST, and all ye are brethren²." And when discovered and forced to the eminence which they shunned, they made much lament, and were in many tears. And they felt that their higher consideration in the world demanded

⁹ Mark x. 23.¹ James ii. 5.² Matt. xx. 27; xxiii. 8.

of them some greater strictness and self-denial in their course of life, lest it should turn to a curse, lest the penance of which it would defraud them here, should be visited on them in manifold measure hereafter. They feared to have "their good things" and "their consolation" on earth, lest they should not have Lazarus' portion in heaven. That state of things indeed is now long passed away, but let us not miss the doctrinal lesson which it conveys, if we will not take it for our pattern.

Before I conclude, however, I must take notice of an objection which may be made to what I have been saying. It may be asked, "Are not these dangerous things the gifts of God? Are they not even called blessings? Did not God bestow riches and honour upon Solomon as a reward? And did He not praise him for praying for wisdom? And does not St. Paul say, 'Covet earnestly the best gifts'³?" It is true; nor did I ever mean to say that these things were bad in themselves, but bad for us, if we seek them as ends; and dangerous to us, from their fascination. "Every creature of God is good," as St. Paul says, "and nothing to be refused"⁴;" but circumstances may make good gifts injurious in our particular case. Wine is good in itself, but not for a man in a fever. If our souls were in perfect health, riches and authority, and strong powers of mind, would be very suitable to us: but they are weak and diseased, and require so great a grace of God to bear them well, that we may be well content to be without them.

Still it may be urged, Are we then absolutely to give them up if we have them, and not accept them when offered? It may be a duty to keep them, it is sometimes a duty to accept them; for in certain cases God calls upon us not so much to put them away, as to put away our old natures, and make us new hearts and new spirits, wherewith to receive them. At the same time, it is merely for our safety to know their perilous nature, and to beware of them, and in no case to take them simply for their own sake, but with a view to God's glory. They must be instruments in our hands to promote the cause of Gospel truth. And, in this light, they have their value, and impart their real pleasure; but be it remembered, that value, and that happiness, are imparted by the

³ 1 Cor. xii. 31.

⁴ 1 Tim. iv. 4.

end to which they are dedicated ; It is " the altar that sanctifieth the gift : " but, compared with the end to which they must be directed, their real and intrinsic excellence is little indeed.

In this point of view it is, that we are to covet earnestly the best gifts : for it is a great privilege to be allowed to serve the Church. Have we wealth ? let it be the means of extending the knowledge of the truth—abilities ? of recommending it—power ? of defending it.

From what I have said concerning the danger of possessing the things which the world admires, we may draw the following rule : use them, as far as given, with gratitude for what is really good in them, and with a desire to promote God's glory by means of them ; but do not go out of the way to seek them. They will not on the whole make you happier, and they may make you less religious.

For us, indeed, who are all the adopted children of God our SAVIOUR, what addition is wanting to complete our happiness ? What can increase their peace who believe and trust in the SON of GOD ? Shall we add a drop to the ocean, or grains to the sand of the sea ? Shall we ask for an earthly inheritance, who have the fulness of an heavenly one ; power, when in prayer we can use the power of CHRIST ; or wisdom, guided as we may be by the true Wisdom and Light of men ? It is in this sense that the Gospel of CHRIST is a leveller of ranks : we pay, indeed, our superiors full reverence, and with cheerfulness as unto the LORD ; and we honour eminent talents as deserving admiration and reward ; and the more readily act we thus, because these are little things to pay. The time is short ; year follows year, and the world is passing away. It is of small consequence to those who are beloved of God, and walk in the Spirit of truth, whether they pay or receive honour, which is but transitory and profitless. To the true Christian the world assumes another and more interesting appearance, it is no longer a stage for the great and noble, for the ambitious to fret in, and the wealthy to revel in ; but it is a scene of probation. Every soul is a candidate for immortality. And the more we realize this view of things, the more will the accidental distinctions of nature or fortune die away

from our view, and we shall be led habitually to pray, that upon every Christian may descend, in rich abundance, not merely worldly goods, but that heavenly grace which alone can turn this world to good account for us, and make it the path of peace and of life everlasting.

SERMON CXXXIV.

THE SEASON OF EPIPHANY.

JOHN ii. 11.

“ This beginning of miracles did JESUS in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory ; and His disciples believed on HIM.”

THE Epiphany is a season especially set apart for adoring the glory of CHRIST. The word may be taken to mean the manifestation of His glory, and leads us to the contemplation of HIM as a King upon His throne in the midst of His court, with His servants around Him, and His guards in attendance. At Christmas we commemorate His grace ; and in Lent His temptation ; and on Good-Friday His sufferings and death ; and on Easter-Day His victory ; and on Holy Thursday His return to the FATHER ; and in Advent we anticipate His second coming. And on all of these HE does something, or suffers something : but in the Epiphany and the weeks after it, we celebrate HIM, not as on His field of battle, or in His solitary retreat, but as an august and glorious King ; we view HIM as the Object of our worship. Then only, during His whole earthly history, did HE fulfil the type of Solomon, and held (as I may say) a court, and received the homage of His subjects ; *viz.* when HE was an infant. His throne was His undefiled Mother's arms ; His chamber of state was a cottage or a cave ; the worshippers were the wise men of the East, and they brought presents, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. All around and about HIM seemed of earth, except to the eye of faith ; one

note alone had HE of divinity. As great men of this world are often plainly dressed, and look like other men, all but some one costly ornament on their breast or on their brow; so the SON of Mary in His lowly dwelling, and in an infant's form, was declared to be the SON of GOD Most High, the FATHER of Ages, and the Prince of Peace, by His star; a wonderful appearance which had guided the wise men all the way from the East, even unto Bethlehem.

This being the character of this season of the year, our services throughout it, as far as they are proper to it, are full of the image of a king in his royal court, of a sovereign surrounded by subjects, of a glorious prince upon a throne. There is no thought of war, or of strife, or of suffering, or of triumph, or of vengeance connected with the Epiphany, but of august majesty, of power, of prosperity, of splendour, of serenity, of benignity. Now, if at any time, it is fit to say, "The LORD is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before HIM¹." "The LORD sitteth above the waterflood, and the LORD remaineth a King for ever." "The LORD of Hosts is with us; the GOD of Jacob is our refuge." "O come let us worship, and fall down, and kneel before the LORD our Maker." "O magnify the LORD our God, and fall down before His footstool, for HE is holy." "O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; bring presents, and come into His courts."

I said that at this time of year the portions of our services which are proper to the season are of a character to remind us of a king on his throne, receiving the devotion of his subjects. Such is the narrative itself, already referred to, of the coming of the wise men, who sought HIM with their gifts from a place afar off, and fell down and worshipped HIM. Such too, is the account of His baptism, which forms the Second Lesson of the feast of the Epiphany, when the HOLY GHOST descended on HIM, and a Voice from heaven acknowledged HIM to be the SON of GOD. And if we look at the Gospels read throughout the season, we shall find them all containing some kingly action of CHRIST, the MEDIATOR between GOD and man. Thus in the Gospel for the First Sunday, HE manifests His glory in the temple at the age of

¹ Hab. ii. 20.

twelve years, sitting among the doctors, and astonishing them with His wisdom. In the Gospel for the Second Sunday HÆ manifests His glory at the wedding feast, when HÆ turned the water into wine, a miracle not of necessity or urgency, but especially an august and bountiful act—the act of a King, who out of His abundance gave a gift to His own, therewith to make merry with their friends. In the Third Sunday, the leper worships CHRIST, who thereupon heals him; the centurion, again, reminds HIM of His angels and ministers, and HÆ speaks the word, and his servant is restored forthwith. In the Fourth, a storm arises on the lake, while HÆ is peacefully sleeping, without care or sorrow, on a pillow; then HÆ rises and rebukes the winds and the sea, and a calm follows, deep as that of His own soul, and the beholders worship HIM. And next HÆ casts out Legion, after the man possessed with it had run and also worshipped HIM¹. In the Fifth, we hear of His kingdom on earth, and of the enemy sowing tares amid the good seed. And in the Sixth, of His second Epiphany from heaven, “with power and great glory.”

Such is the series of manifestations which the Sundays after the Epiphany bring before us. When with the doctors in the temple, HÆ is manifested as a prophet—in turning the water into wine as a priest—in His miracles of healing, as a bounteous LORD, giving out of His abundance—in His rebuking the sea as a Sovereign, whose word is law—in the parable of the wheat and tares, as a guardian and ruler—in His second coming, as a lawgiver and judge.

And as in these Gospels we hear of our Saviour's greatness, so in the Epistles and First Lessons we hear of the privileges and the duties of the new people, whom HÆ has formed to show forth His praise. Christians are at once the temple of CHRIST, and His worshippers and ministers in the temple; they are the Bride of the LAMB taken collectively; and taken individually, they are the friends of the Bridegroom and the guests at the marriage feast. In these various points of view are they presented to us in the Services during these weeks. In the Lessons from the prophet

¹ Mark v. 6.

Isaiah we read of the gifts and privileges, the characteristics, the power, the fortunes of the Church—how widely spreading, even throughout all the Gentiles; how awful and high, how miraculously endowed, how revered, how powerful upon earth, how rich in temporal goods, how holy, how pure in doctrine, how full of the Spirit. And in the Epistles for the successive Sundays, we hear of the duties and distinguishing marks of her true members, principally as laid down in the 12th and 13th chapters of St. Paul to the Romans; then as the same Apostle enjoins them upon the Colossians; and then in St. John's exhortations in his General Epistle.

The Collects are of the same character, as befit the supplications of subjects coming before their King. The first is for knowledge and power, the second is for peace, the third is for strength in our infirmities, the fourth is for help in temptation, the fifth is for protection, and the sixth is for preparation and purification against CHRIST's second coming. There is none which would suit a season of trial, or of repentance, or of waiting, or of exultation—they befit a season of peace, thanksgiving, and adoration, when CHRIST is not manifested in pain, conflict, or victory, but in the tranquil possession of His kingdom.

It will be sufficient to make one reflection, which suggests itself from what I have been saying.

You will observe, then, that the only display of royal greatness, the only season of majesty, homage, and glory, which our LORD had on earth, was in His infancy and youth. Gabriel's message to Mary was in its style and manner such as befitted an angel speaking to CHRIST's Mother. Elisabeth, too, saluted Mary, and the future Baptist his hidden LORD, in the same honourable way. Angels announced His birth, and the shepherds worshipped. A star appeared, and the wise men rose from the East and made HIM offerings. HE was brought to the temple, and Simeon took HIM in His arms, and returned thanks for HIM. HE grew to twelve years old, and again HE appeared in the temple, and took His seat in the midst of the doctors. But here His earthly majesty had its end, or if seen afterwards, it was but now and then, by glimpses and by sudden gleams, but with no steady sustained light, and no diffused radiance. We are told at the

close of the last-mentioned narrative, "And HE went down with His parents, and came to Nazareth, *and was subjected unto them*²." His subjection and servitude now began in fact. HE had come in the form of a servant, and now HE took on HIM a servant's office. How much is contained in the idea of His subjection! and it began, and His time of glory ended, when HE was twelve years old.

Solomon, the great type of the Prince of Peace, reigned forty years, and his name and greatness was known far and wide through the East. Joseph, the much loved son of Jacob, who in an earlier age of the Church, was a type of CHRIST in His kingdom, was in power and favour eighty years, twice as long as Solomon. But CHRIST, the true Revealer of secrets, and the Dispenser of the bread of life, the true wisdom and majesty of the FATHER, manifested His glory but in His early years, and then the Sun of Righteousness was clouded. For HE was not to reign really, till HE left the world. HE has reigned ever since; nay, reigned *in* the world, though HE is not in sensible presence in it—the invisible King of a visible kingdom—for HE came on earth but to show what His reign would be, after HE had left it, and to submit to suffering and dishonour, that HE *might* reign.

It often happens, that when persons are in serious illnesses, and in delirium in consequence, or other disturbance of mind, they have some few minutes of respite in the midst of it, when they are even more than themselves, as if to show us what they really are, and to interpret for us what else would be dreary. And again, some have thought that the minds of children have on them traces of something more than earthly, which fade away as life goes on, but are the promise of what is intended for them hereafter. And somewhat in this way, if we may dare compare ourselves with our gracious LORD, in a parallel though higher way, CHRIST descends to the shadows of this world, with the tokens on HIM of that future glory into which HE could not enter till HE had suffered. The star burned brightly over HIM for awhile, though it then faded away.

We see the same law, as it may be called, of Divine Providence in other cases also. Consider, for instance, how the prospect of

² Luke ii. 51.

our LORD's passion opens upon the Apostles in the sacred history? Where did they hear of it? "Moses and Elias on the mountain appeared with HIM in glory, and spake of his decease, which HE should accomplish at Jerusalem³." That is, the season of His bitter trial was preceded by a short gleam of the glory which was to be, when HE was suddenly transfigured, "and the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering⁴." And with this glory in prospect, our LORD abhorred not to die: as it is written, "Who for the joy that was set before HIM, endured the Cross, despising the shame."

Again, HE forewarned His Apostles that they in like manner should be persecuted for righteousness' sake, and be afflicted and delivered up, and hated, and killed. Such was to be their life in this world, "that if in this world only they had had hope in CHRIST, they had been of all men most miserable⁵." Well then, observe, their trial too was preceded by a season of peace and pleasantness, in anticipation of their future reward—for before the day of Pentecost, for forty days CHRIST was with them, soothing, comforting, confirming them, "and speaking of the things pertaining unto the kingdom of God⁶." As Moses stood on the mount and saw the promised land and all its riches, and yet Joshua had to fight many battles before he got possession, so did the Apostles, before descending into the valley of the shadow of death, whence nought of heaven was to be seen, stand upon the heights and look over that valley which they had to cross, to the city of the living God beyond it.

And so again, St. Paul, after many years of toil, looked back to a time when he had a celestial vision, anticipatory of what was to be his blessedness in the end. "I knew a man in CHRIST," he says, meaning himself, "about fourteen years ago, caught up to the third heaven. . . . And I knew such a man . . . how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter⁷." St. Paul then, as the twelve Apostles, and as our LORD before him, had his brief season of repose and consolation before the battle.

And lastly: the whole Church also may be said to have had a similar mercy vouchsafed to it at first, in anticipation of what is

³ Luke ix. 30, 31.

⁴ Ib. 29.

⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 19.

⁶ Acts i. 3.

⁷ 2 Cor. xii. 3, 4.

to be in the end. We know, alas, too well, that, according to our LORD's account of it, tares are to be with the wheat, fish of every kind in the net, all through its sojourning on earth. But in the end, "the saints shall stand before the throne of God, and serve HIM day and night in His temple; and the LAMB shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters," and there shall be no more "sorrow nor pain, nor anything that defileth or worketh abomination," "for without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Now was not this future glory strikingly shadowed forth in the first infancy of the Church, when before the seal was opened and trial began, "there was silence in heaven for half an hour;" and "the disciples continued daily with one accord in the temple, and in prayers, breaking bread from house to house, being of one heart, and of one soul, eating their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people⁸;" while hypocrites and "liars," like Ananias and Sapphira, were struck dead, and "sorcerers," like Simon, were detected and denounced?

To conclude; let us thankfully cherish all seasons of peace and joy which are vouchsafed us here below. Let us beware of abusing them, and of resting in them, of forgetting that they *are* special privileges, of neglecting to look out for trouble and trial, as our due and our portion. Trial is our portion here—we must not think it strange when trial comes after peace. Still God mercifully does grant a respite now and then; and perhaps HE grants it to us the more, the more careful we are not to abuse it. For all seasons we must thank HIM, for time of sorrow and time of joy, time of warfare, and time of peace. And the more we thank HIM for one, the more we shall be drawn to thank HIM for the other. Each has its own proper fruit, and its own peculiar blessedness. Yet our mortal flesh shrinks from the one, and of itself prefers the other;—it prefers rest to toil, peace to war, joy to sorrow, health to pain and sickness. When then CHRIST gives us what is pleasant, let us take it as a refreshment by the way, that we may, when God calls, go in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God.

⁸ Acts ii. 46, 47.

Let us rejoice in Epiphany with trembling, that at Septuagesima we may go into the vineyard with the labourers with cheerfulness, and may sorrow in Lent with thankfulness ; let us rejoice now, not as if we have attained, but in hope of attaining. Let us take our present happiness, not as our true rest, but, like what the land of Canaan was to the Israelites,—a type and shadow of it. If we now enjoy God's ordinances, let us not cease to pray that they may prepare us for His presence hereafter. If we enjoy the presence of friends, let them remind us of the communion of saints before His throne. Let us trust in nothing here, yet draw hope from everything—that at length the Lord may be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning may be ended.

SERMON CXXXV.

THE DUTY OF SELF-DENIAL.

PSALM cxxxi. 2.

“Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother : my soul is even as a weaned child.”

SELF-DENIAL of some kind or other is involved, as is evident, in the very notion of renewal and holy obedience. To change our hearts is to learn to love things which we do not naturally love—to unlearn the love of this world ; but this involves, of course, a thwarting of our natural wishes and tastes. To be righteous and obedient implies self-command ; but to possess power we must have gained it ; nor can we gain it without a vigorous struggle, a persevering warfare against ourselves. The very notion of being religious implies self-denial, because by nature we do not love religion.

Self-denial, then, is a subject never out of place in Christian teaching ; still more appropriate is it at a time like this, when we have entered upon the forty days of Lent, the season of the year set apart for fasting and humiliation.

This indeed is not all that is meant by self-denial : but before proceeding with the subject, I would ask whether the generality of mankind go as far as this : it is plain that they do not. They do not go so far as to realize to themselves that religious obedience involves a thwarting of those wishes and inclinations which are natural to them. They do not like to be convinced, much less

will they act upon the notion that religion is difficult. You may hear men of the world say plainly, and as if in the way of argument, "that God will not punish us for indulging the passions with which we are born; that it is no praise to be unnatural; and no crime to be a man." This, however, may seem an extreme case; yet are there not a great many decent and respectable men, as far as outward character goes, who at least fix their thoughts on worldly comfort, as the greatest of goods, and who labour to place themselves in easy circumstances, under the notion that, when they can retire from the business of their temporal calling, then they may (in a quiet, unexceptionable way of course) consult their own tastes and likings, take their pleasure, and indulge themselves in self-importance and self-satisfaction, in the enjoyment of wealth, power, distinction, popularity, and credit? I am not at this moment asking whether such indulgences are in themselves allowable or not, but whether the life which centres in them does not imply the absence of any very deep views of sanctification as a process, a change, a painful toil, of working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, of preparing to meet our God, and waiting for the judgment? You may go into mixed society; you will hear men conversing on their friend's prospects, openings in trade, or realized wealth, or his advantageous situation, the pleasant connexions he has formed, the land he has purchased, the house he has built; then they amuse themselves with conjecturing what this or that man's property may be, where he lost, where he gained, his shrewdness, or his rashness, or his good fortune in this or that speculation. Observe, I do not say that such conversation is wrong; I do not say that we must always have on our lips the very thoughts which are deepest in our hearts, or that it is safe to judge of individuals by such speeches; but when this sort of conversation is the customary standard conversation of the world, and when a line of conduct answering to it is the prevalent conduct of the world (and this is the case), is it not a grave question for each of us, as living in the world, to ask himself what abiding notion we have of the necessity of self-denial, and how far we are clear of the danger of resembling that evil generation which "eat and drank, which married wives, and were given in marriage, which bought and sold, planted, and builded, till it

rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all¹ ?”

It is strange, indeed, how far this same forgetfulness and transgression of the duty of self-denial at present spreads. — Take another class of persons, very different from those just mentioned, men who profess much love for religion—I mean such as maintain, that if a man has faith he will have works without his trouble, so that he need be at no pains about performing them. Such persons at best seem to say, that religious obedience is to follow as a matter of course, an easy work, or rather a necessary consequence, from having some strong urgent motive, or some bright vision of the Truth acting on the mind; and thus they dismiss from their religion the notion of self-denial, or the effort and warfare of faith against our corrupt natural will, whether they actually own that they dismiss it or not. I say that they do this at best; for it often happens, as I just now intimated, that they actually avow their belief that faith is all-sufficient, and do not let their minds dwell at all on the necessity of works of righteousness. All this being considered, surely I am not wrong in saying that the notion of self-denial as a distinct religious duty, and, much more, (as it may well be called,) the essence of religious obedience, is not admitted into the minds of the generality of men.

But let it be observed, I have hitherto spoken of self-denial not as a distinct duty actually commanded in Scripture, but merely as it is involved in the very notion of sanctification, necessarily attendant on that change of nature which God the HOLY SPIRIT vouchsafes to work within us. But now let us consider it in the light of the Scripture precepts concerning it, and we shall come to a still more serious view of it, serious (I mean) to those who are living to the world; it is this,—that it is our duty, not only to deny ourselves what is sinful, but even, in a certain measure, in lawful things, to keep a restraint over ourselves even in innocent pleasures and enjoyments.

Now the first proof I shall give of this will at the same time explain what I mean.

Fasting is clearly a Christian duty, as our SAVIOUR implies in His Sermon on the Mount. Now what is fasting but a refrain-

¹ Luke xvii. 27—29.

ing from what is lawful ; not merely from what is sinful, but what is innocent ?—from that bread which we might lawfully take and eat with thanksgiving, but which at certain times we do not take, in order to deny ourselves. Such is Christian self-denial,—not merely a mortification of what is sinful, but an abstinence even from God's blessings.

Again : consider the following declaration of our SAVIOUR ; HE first tells us, " Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." And again ; " Strive to enter in, for many, I say unto you, will seek (only seek) to enter in, and shall not be able." Then HE explains to us what this peculiar difficulty of a Christian's life consists in : " If any man come to ME, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple²." Now whatever is precisely meant by this (which I will not here stop to inquire), so far is evident, that our LORD enjoins a certain refraining, not merely from sin, but from innocent comforts and enjoyments of this life, or a self-denial in things lawful.

Again, HE says, " If any man will come after ME, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow ME³." Here HE shows us from His own example what Christian self-denial is. It is taking on us a cross after His pattern, not a mere refraining from sin, for HE had no sin, but a giving up what we might lawfully use. This was the peculiar character in which CHRIST came on earth. It was this spontaneous and exuberant self-denial which brought HIM down. HE who was one with God, took upon HIM our nature, and suffered death—and why ? to save us whom HE needed not save. Thus HE denied HIMSELF, and took up His cross. This is the very aspect, in which God, as revealed in Scripture, is distinguished from that exhibition of His glory which nature gives us : power, wisdom, love, mercy, long-suffering—these attributes, though far more fully and clearly displayed in Scripture than in nature, still are in their degree seen on the face of the visible creation ; but self-denial, if it may be said, this incomprehensible attribute of Divine Providence, is disclosed to us only in Scripture. " God so loved the world that

² Matt. vii. 14. Luke xiii. 24. xiv. 26.

³ Luke ix. 23.

HE gave His SON ⁴." Here is self-denial. And the SON of GOD so loved us, that " though HE was rich yet for our sakes HE became poor ⁵." Here is our SAVIOUR'S self-denial. " HE pleased not HIMSELF."

And what CHRIST did when HE came on earth, that have all His saints done both before and since His coming. Even the saints of the Old Testament so conducted themselves, to whom a temporal promise was made, and who, if any, might have surrendered themselves to the enjoyment of it. They had a temporal promise, they had a present reward; yet, with a noble faith, and a largeness of soul (how they put us to shame who have so much higher privileges!) the Jewish believers grudged themselves the milk and honey of Canaan, as seeking a better country, that is a heavenly. Elijah, how unlike is he to one who had a temporal promise! Or take again the instance of Daniel, which is still more striking,— " They that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses." Daniel was first in power in the palace of the greatest monarchs of his time. Yet what do we read of him? First of his living upon pulse and water, afterwards of his fasting in sackcloth and ashes, at another time of his mourning three full weeks, eating no pleasant bread, neither flesh nor wine coming in his mouth, nor anointing himself at all, till those three weeks were fulfilled. Can any thing more clearly show the duty of self-denial, even in lawful things, in the case of Christians, when even GOD'S servants, before CHRIST came and commanded it, in proportion as they had evangelical gifts, observed it?

Or again, consider the words of the text spoken by David, who, if any, had riches and power poured upon him by the hand of GOD. He says, he has " behaved and quieted" himself lest he should be proud, and made himself " as a weaned child." What an impressive word is " weaned!" David had put away the unreserved love, and the use of this world. We naturally love the world, and innocently; it is before us, and meets our eyes and hands first; its pleasures are dear to us, and many of them not in themselves sinful, only in their excess, and some of them not sinful at all;—those, for instance, which we derive from our home, our friends, and our prospects, are the first and natural food of our mind. But as children are weaned from their first nourishment, so must

⁴ John iii. 16.

⁵ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

our souls put away childish things, and be turned from the pleasures of earth to those of heaven ; we must learn to compose and quiet ourselves as a weaned child, to put up with the loss of what is dear to us, nay, voluntarily to give it up for CHRIST's sake.

Much more after CHRIST came does St. Paul give us this same lesson in the ninth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians : " Every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things," *i. e.* has power over himself, and keeps himself in subjection, as he presently says. Again, in the seventh chapter, " The time is short ; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it." Here the same doctrine of moderation or temperance in lawful indulgences is strongly enforced ; to weep, to rejoice, to buy, to possess, to marry, to use this world, are not unlawful, yet we must not use God's earthly gifts to the full, but in all things we must be self-denying.

Such is Christian self-denial, and it is incumbent upon us for many reasons. The Christian denies himself in things lawful because he is aware of his own weakness and liability to sin ; he dares not walk on the edge of a precipice ; instead of going to the extreme of what is allowable, he keeps at a distance from evil, that he may be safe. He abstains lest he should not be temperate ; he fasts lest he should eat and drink with the drunken. As is evident, many things are in themselves right and unexceptionable which are inexpedient in the case of a weak and sinful creature : his case is like that of a sick person ; many kinds of food, good for a man in health, are hurtful when he is ill—wine is poison to a man in a fierce fever. And just so, many acts, thoughts, and feelings, which would have been allowable in Adam before his fall, are prejudicial or dangerous in man fallen. For instance, anger is not sinful in itself. St. Paul implies this, when he says, " Be ye angry and sin not ⁶." And our SAVIOUR on one occasion is said to have been angry, and HE was sinless. ALMIGHTY GOD, too, is angry with the wicked. Anger, then, is not in itself a sinful feeling ; but in man, constituted as he is, it is so highly

⁶ Eph. iv. 26.

dangerous to indulge it, that self-denial here is a duty from mere prudence. It is almost impossible for a man to be angry only so far as he ought to be; he will exceed the right limit; his anger will degenerate into pride, sullenness, malice, cruelty, revenge, and hatred. It will inflame his diseased soul, and poison it. Therefore, he must abstain from it, as if it were *in itself* a sin, (though it is not,) for it is practically such to him.

Again, the love of praise is in itself an innocent passion, and might be indulged, were the world's opinion right and our hearts sound; but, as things are, human applause, if listened to, will soon make us forget how weak and sinful we are; so we must deny ourselves, and accept the praise even of good men, and those we love, cautiously and with reserve.

So, again, love of power is commonly attendant on a great mind; but he is the greatest of a sinful race who refrains himself, and turns from the temptation of it; for it is at once unbecoming and dangerous in a son of Adam. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister," says our LORD; "and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant⁷." His reward will be hereafter; to reign with CHRIST, to sit down with HIM on His throne, to judge angels,—yet without pride.

Again, even in affection towards our relations and friends, we must be watchful over ourselves, lest it seduce us from the path of duty. Many a father, from a kind wish to provide well for his family, neglects his own soul. Here, then, is a fault; not that we can love our relations too well, but that that strong and most praiseworthy affection for them may, accidentally, ensnare and corrupt our weak nature.

These considerations will show us the meaning of our SAVIOUR's words already cited, about the duty of hating our friends. To hate is to feel that perfect distaste for an object, that you wish it put away and got rid of; it is, to turn away from it, and to blot out the thought of it from your mind. Now, this is just the feeling we must cherish towards all earthly blessings, so far as CHRIST does not cast His light upon them. HE (blessed be His name) has sanctioned and enjoined love and care for our relations and friends. It is a great duty; but should at any time

⁷ Matt. xx. 26, 27.

His guidance lead us by a strange way, and the light of His providence pass on, and cast these objects of our earthly affection into the shade, then they must at once be in the shade to *us*,—they must, for the time, disappear from our hearts. “He that loveth father or mother more than ME, is not worthy of ME.” So HE says; and at such times, though still loving them, we shall seem to hate them; for we shall put aside the thought of them, and act as if they did not exist. And in this sense an ancient and harsh proverb is true: we must always so love our friends as feeling that one day or other we may perchance be called upon to hate them,—that is, forget them in the pursuit of higher duties.

Here, again, then, is an instance of self-denial in lawful things; and if a person says it is painful thus to feel, and that it checks the spontaneous and continual flow of love towards our friends to have this memento sounding in our ears, we must boldly acknowledge that it is painful. It is a sad thought, not that we can ever be called upon actually to put away the love of them, but to have to act as if we did not love them,—as Abraham when called on to slay his son. And this thought of the uncertainty of the future, doubtless, does tinge all our brightest affections (as far as this world is concerned) with a grave and melancholy hue. We need not shrink from this confession, remembering that this life is not our rest or happiness;—“*that* remaineth” to come. This sober chastised feeling is the very temper of David when he speaks of having composed and quieted his soul, and weaned it from the babe’s nourishment which this world supplies.

I hope I have made it clear, by these instances, what is meant by Christian self-denial. If we have good health, and are in easy circumstances, let us beware of high-mindedness, self-sufficiency, self-conceit, arrogance; of delicacy of living, indulgences, luxuries, comforts. Nothing is so likely to corrupt our hearts, and to seduce us from God, as to surround ourselves with comforts,—to have things our own way,—to be the centre of a sort of world, whether of things animate or inanimate, which minister to us. Then, in turn, we shall depend on them; they will become necessary to us; their very service and adulation will lead us to trust ourselves to them, and to idolize them. What examples are there in Scripture of soft luxurious men! Was Abraham before

the Law, who wandered through his days, without a home? or Moses, who gave the Law, and died in the wilderness? or David under the Law, who "had no proud looks," and was "as a weaned child?" or the Prophets, in the latter days of the Law, who wandered in sheep-skins and goat-skins? or the Baptist, when the Gospel was superseding it, who was clad in raiment of camels' hair, and ate the food of the wilderness? or the Apostles, who were the offscouring of all things? or our blessed SAVIOUR, who "had not a place to lay His head?" Who are the soft luxurious men in Scripture? There was the rich man, who "fared sumptuously every day," and then "lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment." There was that other, whose "ground brought forth plentifully," and who said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" and his soul was required of him that night. There was Demas, who forsook St. Paul, "having loved this present world." And, alas! there was that highly-favoured, that divinely-inspired king, rich and wise Solomon, whom it availed nothing to have measured the earth, and numbered its inhabitants, when in his old age he "loved many strange women," and worshipped their gods.

Far be it from us, soldiers of CHRIST, thus to perplex ourselves with this world, who are making our way towards the world to come! "No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please HIM who hath chosen him to be a soldier. If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." This is St. Paul's rule, as has already been referred to: accordingly, in another place, he bears witness of himself that he "died daily." Day by day he got more and more dead to this world; he had fewer ties with earth, a larger treasure in heaven. Nor let us think that it is over-difficult to imitate him, though we be not Apostles, nor are called to any extraordinary work, nor are enriched with any miraculous gifts: he would have all men like himself, and all may be like him, according to their place and measure of grace. If we would be followers of the great Apostle, first let us with him fix our eyes upon CHRIST our SAVIOUR; consider the splendour and glory of His holiness, and try to love it. Let us strive and pray that the love of holiness may be created within our hearts, and acts will follow, such as befit us and our circumstances, in due time, without our

distressing ourselves to find what they should be. You need not attempt to draw any precise line between what is sinful and what is more allowable : look up to CHRIST, and deny yourselves everything, whatever its character, which you think HE would have you relinquish. You need not calculate and measure, if you love much : you need not perplex yourselves with points of curiosity, if you have a heart to venture after HIM. True difficulties will sometimes arise, but they will be seldom. HE bids you take up your cross ; therefore accept the daily opportunities which occur of yielding to others, when you need not yield, and of doing unpleasant services, which you might avoid. HE bids those who would be highest, live as the lowest : therefore, turn from ambitious thoughts, and (as far as you religiously may) make resolves against taking on you authority and rule. HE bids you sell and give alms ; therefore, hate to spend money on yourself. Shut your ears to praise, when it grows loud : set your face like a flint, when the world ridicules, and smile at its threats. Learn to master your heart, when it would burst forth into vehemence, or prolong a barren sorrow, or dissolve into unseasonable tenderness. Curb your tongue, and turn away your eye, lest you fall into temptation. Avoid the dangerous air which relaxes you, and brace yourself upon the heights. Be up at prayer “ a great while before day,” and seek the true, your only Bridegroom, “ by night on your bed.” So shall self-denial become natural to you, and a change come over you, gently and imperceptibly ; and, like Jacob, you will lie down in the waste, and will soon see Angels and a way opened for you into heaven.

SERMON CXXXVI.

THE YOKE OF CHRIST.

MATT. xi. 29, 30.

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of ME, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

THESE words, which are brought before us in the Gospel of to-day's festival¹, are also found in the address made to us upon Ash Wednesday, in which we are told that if we “return unto HIM who is the merciful Receiver of all true penitent sinners, if we will take His easy yoke and light burden upon us, to follow HIM in lowliness, patience, and charity; this, if we do, CHRIST will deliver us from the curse of the law, and from the extreme malediction which shall light upon them that shall be set on the left hand.” A few days since we were called upon a Fast-day to take on us CHRIST's yoke, and now on a Festival of an Apostle, the call is repeated.

And with a particular fitness it occurs, now as often, that we celebrate the feast of St. Matthias, during Lent; for if there be an Apostle who above the rest may be taken to remind us of the duty of mortification, it is he. Our LORD, when asked why His disciples did not fast, said, they could not fast while HE was with them, but that the time would come, when the Bridegroom should be taken away from them, and then should they fast in

¹ Preached on St. Matthias's day during Lent.

those days. That time was now come, when St. Matthias was chosen to be an Apostle. CHRIST had gone away. Peace and joy the Apostles had abundantly, more so than when HE was with them; but for that very reason, it was not such a joy "as the world giveth." It was His own joy which arose out of pain and chastisement. This was the joy which St. Matthias received when he was made an Apostle. He never had been an Apostle under age. He had indeed been with our LORD, but not as an Apostle. The rest had been chosen (as it were) as children; they had been heirs of the kingdom, while under tutors and governors, and, though Apostles, had not understood their calling, had had ambitious thoughts or desires after riches, and were indulged for a while, ere new made, with the old wine, lest the bottles should burst. But St. Matthias came into his inheritance at once. He took upon him at once, upon his election, the power and the penalty of the Apostolate. No dreams of earthly prosperity could flit around that throne, which was reared over the grave of one who had been tried and had fallen, and under the immediate shadow of the cross of HIM he had betrayed.

Well, then, does St. Matthias repeat to us on this day our LORD's words, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of ME," for he had taken it on him from the first. His Pastoral Staff had ever been a crosier. He had had no youth. He had borne the yoke in his youth. He entered at once upon his long Lent, and he rejoiced in it.

The exhortation, then, which our SAVIOUR gives in to-day's Gospel, and of which St. Matthias's history reminds us, is at the present season most suitable. Our SAVIOUR says, "Come unto ME," and then HE adds, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of ME." Thus HE first calls us to HIM, and next shows us the way. "Come unto ME," HE says, "and I will give you rest;" and then adds, "Take My yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest for your souls." HE told them that they must come to HIM, but did not at once tell them the way; HE told them they must bear a yoke, but did not at once tell them what it was. St. Peter, in consequence, inquired about it on one occasion, and was bid to wait awhile, and he should know it more plainly. Our LORD had said, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow ME now, but thou shalt follow ME afterwards." "Ye shall seek ME," HE said, "and

whither I go ye cannot come²." HE spoke of His yoke, the way of His cross, as St. Peter found when at length, after His resurrection, he was told plainly what should befall him. "When thou wast young," said our LORD to him, by the lake of Tiberias, when thou wast a child in the faith, and hadst thine own way, "thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest," as just before St. Peter had girt his fisher's coat unto him, and cast himself into the sea; "but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not³." And then HE added, "Follow me." St. Peter, indeed, was called upon literally to take CHRIST's yoke upon him, to learn of HIM and walk in His ways; but what he underwent in fulness, all CHRIST's disciples must share in their measure, in some way or other. Again, in another place, our LORD speaks more expressly; "If any man will come after ME, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow ME⁴." Here we have the words of the text emphatically repeated. To come to CHRIST, is to come after HIM; to take up our cross, is to take upon us His yoke; and though HE calls this an easy yoke, yet it is easy because it is His yoke, and HE makes it easy; still it does not cease to be a yoke, and it is troublesome and distressing, because it is a yoke.

Let us set it down then, as a first principle in religion, that all of us must come to CHRIST, in some sense or other, through things naturally unpleasant to us; it may be even through bodily suffering, such as the Apostles endured, or it may be nothing more than the subduing of our natural infirmities and the sacrifice of our natural wishes; it may be pain greater or pain less, on a public stage or a private one; but, till the words "yoke" and "cross" can stand for something pleasant, the bearing of our yoke and cross is something not pleasant; and though rest is promised as our reward, yet the way to rest must lie through discomfort and distress of heart.

This I say must be taken as a first principle in religion; it concerns us all, it concerns young and old, rich and poor, all of whom are apt to consider it a valid reason for disregarding and speaking against a religious life, that it is so strict and distasteful.

² John xiii. 36. 33.

³ John xxi. 18.

⁴ Matt. xvi. 24.

They shrink from religion as something gloomy, or frightful, or dull, or intrusive, or exorbitant. And, alas, sometimes it is attempted to lead them to religion by making it appear not difficult and severe. Severe truths are put aside; religion is made to consist in a worldly security, or again in a heated enthusiastic state of mind. But this is a deceit. I do not of course mean, far from it, that religion is not full of joy and peace also; "My yoke," says CHRIST, "is easy, and My burden is light;" but grace makes it so; in itself it is severe, and any form of doctrine which teaches otherwise forgets that CHRIST calls us to His yoke, and that that yoke is a cross.

If you call to mind some of the traits of that special religious character to which we are called, you will readily understand how both it, and the discipline by which it is formed in us, are not naturally pleasant to us. That character is described in the text as meekness and lowliness; for we are told to "learn" of HIM who was "meek and lowly in heart." The same character is presented to us at greater length in our SAVIOUR's sermon on the Mount, in which seven notes of a Christian are given to us, in themselves of a painful and humbling character, but joyful, because they are blessed by HIM. HE mentions, first, "the poor in spirit;" this is denoted in the text, under the word "lowly in heart;"—secondly, those "that mourn;" and this surely is their peculiarity who are bearing on their shoulders the yoke of CHRIST;—thirdly, "the meek;" and these too are spoken of in the text, when HE bids us to be like HIMSELF who "is meek;"—fourthly, those which do "hunger and thirst after righteousness;" and what righteousness, but that which CHRIST's Cross wrought out, and which becomes our righteousness when we take on us the yoke of the Cross? Fifthly, "the merciful," and as the Cross is in itself the work of infinite mercy, so when we bear it, it makes us merciful. Sixthly, "the pure in heart;" and this is the very benefit which the Cross first does us when marked on our forehead when infants, to sever us from the world, the flesh, and the devil, to circumcise us from the first Adam, and to make us pure as HE is pure. Seventhly, "the peace-makers," and as HE "made peace by the blood of His Cross," so do we become peace-makers after His pattern. And, lastly, after all seven, HE adds, those "which are persecuted for righteousness' sake;"

which is nothing but the Cross itself, and the truest form of His yoke, spoken of last of all, after mention has been made of its fruits.

Such is the character of which the text speaks. A man who is poor in spirit, meek, pure in heart, merciful, peace-making, penitent, and eager after righteousness, is truly (according to a term in current use) a mortified man. He is of a character which does not please us by nature even to see, and much less to imitate. We do not even approve or love the character itself, till we have some portion of the grace of God. We do not like the look of mortification till we are used to it, and associate pleasant thoughts with it. "And when we shall see HIM, there is no beauty, that we should desire HIM," says the Prophet. To whom has some picture of saint or doctor of the Church any charm at first sight? Who does not prefer the ruddy glow of health and brightness of the eyes? "He hath no form nor comeliness," as his LORD and Master before him. And as we do not like the look of saintliness, neither do we like the life. When CHRIST first announced His destined sufferings, Peter took HIM and began to rebuke HIM, saying, "Be it far from THEE, LORD, this shall not be unto THEE." Here was the feeling of one who was as yet a mere child in grace; "When he was a child, he spake as a child, he understood as a child, he thought as a child," before he had "become a man and had put away childish things."

This is St. Paul's language, writing to the Corinthians, and he there furnishes us with another description, under the name of charity, of that same heavenly temper of mind in which Christian manhood consists, and which our LORD had already described in the sermon on the Mount; HE says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." And then HE describes it as suffering long, kind, envying not, vaunting not, behaving seemly, unselfish, rejoicing in the truth, slow to be provoked, bearing all things and hoping all. And with this agrees St. James's account of wisdom, that it is "pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy⁵."

⁵ James iii. 17.

In all these passages, one and the same character is described acceptable to God, unacceptable to man; unacceptable to man both in itself, and because it involves a change, and that a painful one, in one shape or other. Nothing short of suffering, except in rare cases, makes us what we should be; gentle instead of harsh, meek instead of violent, conceding instead of arrogant, lowly instead of proud, pure-hearted instead of sensual, sensitive of sin instead of carnal. This is the especial object which is set before us, to become holy as HE who has called us is holy, and to discipline and chasten ourselves in order that we may become so; and we may be quite sure, that unless we chasten ourselves, God will chasten us. If we judge ourselves through His mercy, we shall not be judged of HIM; if we do not afflict ourselves in light things, HE will afflict us in heavy things; if we do not set about changing ourselves by gentle measures, HE will change us by severe remedies. "I refrain my soul," says David, "and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother." "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," says St. Paul. Of course Satan will try to turn all our attempts to his own purposes. He will try to make us think too much of ourselves for what we do; he would fain make us despise others; he will try to ensnare us in other ways. Of course he turns all things to evil, as far as he can; all our crosses may become temptations: illness, affliction, bereavement, pain, loss of worldly prospects, anxiety, all may be instruments of evil; so likewise may all methods of self-chastisement, but they ought not to be, and need not. And their legitimate effect, through the grace of the HOLY SPIRIT, is to make us like HIM who suffered all pain, physical and moral, sin excepted, in its fulness. We know what His character was; how grave and subdued His speech, His manner, His acts; what calmness, self-possession, tenderness, and endurance; how HE resisted evil; how HE turned His cheek to the smiter; how HE blessed when persecuted; how HE resigned Himself to His God and FATHER, how HE suffered silently, and opened not His mouth, when accused maliciously.

Alas! so it is; not only does the world not imitate such a temper of mind as this; but, if the truth must be spoken, it despises it. As regards, indeed, our LORD's instance itself, the force of education, habit, custom, fear of each other, and some

remaining awe, keep it from reflecting upon the notes of character which the Gospels ascribe to HIM, but in His followers, it does discern them, it understands and it condemns them. We are bidden lend and give, asking for nothing again; revenge not ourselves; give our cloak when our coat is taken; offer the left cheek when the right is smitten; suffer without complaint; account persons better than they are; keep from bitter words; pray only when others would be restless to act; deny ourselves for the sake of others; live contented with what we are; preserve an ignorance of sin and of the world: what is all this, but a character of mind which the world scorns and ridicules even more than it hates? a character which seems to court insult, because it endures it? Is not this what men of the world would say of such a one? "such a man is unfit for life; he has no eye for any thing; he does not know the difference between good and evil; he is tame and spiritless, he is simple and dull, and a fit prey for the spoiler or defrauder; he is cowardly and narrowminded, unmanly, feeble, superstitious, and a dreamer," with many other words more contemptuous and more familiar than would be becoming to use in Church. Yet such is the character of which CHRIST gave us the pattern; such was the character of Apostles; such the character which has even conquered the world. "In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the HOLY GHOST, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true, as chastened and not killed, as sorrowful yet alway rejoicing;"—these are the weapons of our warfare, "which are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." These are despised by the world, but they have subdued the world. Nay, though they seem most unmanly, they in the event have proved most heroic. For the heroic character springs out of them. He who has thrown himself out of this world, alone can overcome it; he who has cut himself loose of it, alone cannot be touched by it; he alone can be courageous, who

does not fear it; he alone firm, who is not moved by it; he alone severe with it, who does not love it. Despair makes men bold, and so it is that he who has nothing to hope from the world, has nothing to fear from it. He who has really tasted of the true Cross, can taste no bitterer pain, no keener joy.

I have been trying to urge on you, my brethren, that the taking of CHRIST's yoke, and learning of HIM, is something very distinct and special, and very unlike any other service and character. It is the result of a change from a state of nature, a change so great as to be called a death or even a crucifixion of our natural state. Never allow yourselves, my brethren, to fancy that the true Christian character can coalesce with this world's character, or is the world's character improved—merely a superior kind of worldly character. No, it is a new character; or, as St. Paul words it, "a new creation." Speaking of the Cross of CHRIST, he says, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in CHRIST JESUS neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature⁷." It is a new character, and it is one; it is ever one and the same. It is not one in Apostles, and another in the Christian of this day; not one in the high, another in the low; one in rich, another in poor; one in Englishman, another in foreigner; one in man, another in woman. Where CHRIST is put on, St. Paul tells us, there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, but all are one in CHRIST JESUS⁸. What Lazarus is, that must Dives become; what Apostles were, that must each of us be. The high in this world think it suitable in them to show a certain pride and self-confidence; the wealthy claim deference on account of their wealth; kings and princes think themselves above instruction from any; men in the middle ranks consider it enough to be decent and respectable, and deem sanctity superfluous in them; the poor think to be saved by their poverty;—but to one and all CHRIST speaks, "Come unto ME," "Learn of ME." There is but one Cross and one character of mind formed by it; and nothing can be further from it than those tempers and dispositions in which the greater part of men called Christians live. To have

⁷ Gal. vi. 14, 15.

⁸ Gal. iii. 28.

one's own way, to follow one's own tastes, to please one's self, to have things to one's mind, not to be thwarted, to indulge in the comforts of life, to do little for GOD, to think of HIM now and then indeed, but to live to this world ; to aim at things of this world ; to judge of things by our own accidental judgment, be it better or worse ; to measure religious men, to decide upon right or wrong in religion by our favourite fancy ; to take a pride in forming and maintaining our own opinion ; to stand upon our rights ; to fear the hard words and cold looks of men, to be afraid of being too religious, to dread singularity ; to leave our hearts and minds, our thoughts, words, and actions, to take care of themselves :—this, on one side or the other, in this measure or that, is the sort of character which the multitude, even of what are called respectable men, exhibit ; and no wonder, this being the case, that they speak against those who have, or strive to have, a more serious view of religion, and whose mode of living condemns them. If there be but one character of heart that can please GOD, both of these contrary characters cannot please HIM, one or the other does not ; if the easy religion is right, the strict religion is wrong ; if strict religion is right, easy religion is wrong. Let us not deceive ourselves ; there are not two ways of salvation—a broad and a narrow. The world, which chooses the broad way, in consequence hates and spurns the narrow way ; and in turn our Blessed LORD, who has chosen for us the narrow way, hates, scorns, spurns, denounces, the broad way. Surely HE does so ; HE hates the broad way as entirely as the world hates the narrow way ; and if we are persuaded to take part with the world, we take part against HIM. When St. Peter said, “ Be it far from THEE, LORD,” being shocked at the notice that his LORD should suffer, what was His answer ? Did HE thank him for his zeal ? Did HE, at least, let it pass in silence ? He answered, “ Get thee behind ME, Satan, for thou art an offence unto ME ; for thou savourest not the things that be of GOD, but those that be of men⁹.” And in like manner to the corrupt church of Laodicea HE says, “ Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will cast thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not, that thou art wretched

⁹ Matt. xvi. 23.

and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of ME gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." And then HE adds: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten;" that is, HE puts on them His yoke; "Be zealous therefore and repent¹."

To conclude. If ALMIGHTY GOD moves any of us, so that we have high thoughts; if from reading Scripture or holy books we find that we can embrace views above the world; if it is given us to recognize the glory of CHRIST's kingdom, to discern its spiritual nature, to admire the life of saints, and to desire to imitate it; if we feel and understand that it is good to bear the yoke in our youth, good to be in trouble, good to be poor, good to be in low estate, good to be despised; if in imagination we put ourselves at the feet of those mortified men of old time, who, after St. Paul's pattern, died daily, and knew no one after the flesh; if we feel all this, and are conscious we feel it; let us not boast—why? because of a surety such feelings are a pledge to us that God will in some way or other give them exercise. HE gives them to us that HE may use them. HE gives us the opportunity of using them. Dare not to indulge in high thoughts; be cautious of them, and refrain; they are the shadows of coming trials; they are not given for nothing; they are given for an end; that end is coming. My brethren, count the cost; never does God give faith but HE tries it; never does HE implant the wish to sit on His right hand and on His left, but HE fulfils it by making us wash our brethren's feet. O fearful imaginations, which are sure to be realized! O dangerous wishes, which are heard and forthwith answered! Only may God temper things to us, that nothing may be beyond our strength!

¹ Rev. iii. 16—19.

SERMON CXXXVII.

MOSES THE TYPE OF CHRIST.

DEUT. xviii. 15.

“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto HIM ye shall hearken.”

THE history of Moses is valuable to Christians, not only as giving us a pattern of fidelity towards God, of great firmness, and great meekness, but also as affording us a type or figure of our SAVIOUR CHRIST. No prophet arose in Israel like Moses, till CHRIST came, when the promise in the text was fulfilled—“The LORD thy God,” says Moses, “shall raise up unto thee a Prophet like unto me:” that was CHRIST. Now let us consider in what respects Moses resembled CHRIST; we shall find that this inquiry is very suitable at this time of year¹.

1. First, if we survey the general history of the Israelites, we shall find that it is a picture of man’s history as the dispensation of the Gospel displays it to us, and that in it Moses takes the place of CHRIST. The Israelites were in the land of strangers, *viz.* the Egyptians; they were slaves, hardly tasked, and wretched, and God broke their bonds, led them out of Egypt, after many perils, to the promised land, Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. How clearly this prefigures to us the condition of the Christian Church! We are by nature in a strange country; God was our first FATHER, and His Presence our dwelling-place: but we were cast out of paradise for sinning, and are in a dreary land, a valley

¹ Lent.

of darkness and the shadow of death. We are born in this spiritual Egypt, the land of strangers. Still we have old recollections about us, and broken traditions, of our original happiness and dignity as freemen. Thoughts come across us from time to time which show that we were born for better things than to be slaves; yet by nature slaves we are, slaves to the Devil. He is our hard task-master, as Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites; so much the worse than he, in that his chains, though we do not see them, grow more and more heavy every year. They cling about us and grow; they multiply themselves, they shoot out and spread forth, and encircle us, those chains of sin, with many links, minute but heavy, weighing us down to the earth, till at last we are mere slaves of the soil, an evil husbandry, slaves of that fearful harvest which is eternal death. Satan is a tyrant over us, and it seems to us useless to rebel. If we attempt it, we are but overpowered by his huge might, and his oppressive rule, and are made twice the children of hell we were before: we may groan and look about, but we cannot fly from his country. Such is our state by nature.

But Moses conducted the Israelites from the house of bondage to their own land, from which their fathers had descended into Egypt. He came to them from GOD, and, armed with GOD's power, he smote their cruel enemies, led them out of Pharaoh's land, divided the Red Sea, carried them through it, and at length brought them to the borders of Canaan. And who is it that has done this for us Christians? Who but the Eternal SON of GOD, our LORD and SAVIOUR, whose name in consequence we bear? He has rescued us from the arm of him who was stronger than we; and therefore I say in this respect first of all, CHRIST is a second Moses, and a greater. CHRIST has broken the power of the Devil. HE leads us forth on our way, and makes a path through all difficulties, that we may go forward towards heaven. Most men, who have deliberately turned their hearts to seek GOD, must recollect times when the view of the difficulties which lay before them, and of their own weakness, nearly made them sink through fear. Then they were like the children of Israel on the shore of the Red Sea. How boisterous did the waves look! and they could not see beyond them; they seemed taken by their enemies as in a net. Pharaoh with his horsemen hurried on to

reclaim his runaway slaves; the Israelites sank down in terror on the sand of the sea-shore; every moment brought death or captivity nearer to them. Then it was that Moses said, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." And in like manner has CHRIST spoken to us. When our hearts fainted within us, when we said to ourselves, "How is it possible that we should attain heaven?" When we felt how desirable it was to serve God, but felt keenly the power of temptation; when we acknowledged in our hearts that God was holy and most adorable, and obedience to His will most lovely and admirable, and yet recollected instances of our past disobedience, and feared lest all our renewed resolutions to serve HIM would be broken and swept away by the old Adam as mercilessly as heretofore, and that Satan would regain us, and yet prayed earnestly to God for His saving help; then HE saved us against our fear, surprising us by the strangeness of our salvation. This, I say, many a one must recollect in his own case. It happens to Christians not once, but again and again through life. Troubles are lightened, trials are surmounted, fears disappear. We are enabled to do things above our strength by trusting to CHRIST; we overcome our most urgent sins, we surrender our most innocent wishes; we conquer ourselves; we make a way through the powers of the world, the flesh, and the devil; the waves divide, and our LORD, the great Captain of our salvation, leads us over. CHRIST, then, is a second Moses, and greater than he, inasmuch as CHRIST leads from hell to heaven, as Moses led the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan.

2. Next, CHRIST reveals to us the will of God, as Moses to the Israelites. HE is our Prophet, as well as our REDEEMER. None was so favoured as Moses in this respect: before CHRIST came, Moses alone saw God face to face; all prophets after him but heard His voice or saw HIM in vision. Samuel was called by name, but he knew not who called him in the dark night till Eli told him. Isaiah saw the vision of the Seraphim, and heard them cry "holy" before the LORD; but it was not heaven that he saw, but the mere semblance of the earthly temple in which God dwelt among the Jews, and clouds filled it. But Moses in some sense saw God and lived; thus God honoured him. "If there be a prophet among you," said ALMIGHTY GOD, "I, the LORD,

will make MYSELF known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold²:" and on his death we are told, "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face³." When he was in the Mount Sinai it is said of him still more expressly, "The LORD spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend⁴." In the Mount he received from GOD the revelation of the law, and the patterns of the holy services which the Jews were to offer to GOD; and so, being favoured with the intimate knowledge of GOD's counsels, when he came down, his face shone with glory. The Divine majesty was reflected from it, and the people dared not look upon him. "The skin of his face shone while he talked with HIM. And when Aaron and the children of Israel saw Moses, they were afraid to come nigh him." "And till he had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face⁵."

Yet, after all, favoured as he was, Moses saw not the true presence of GOD. Flesh and blood cannot see it. Even when Moses was in the Mount, he was aware that the very fulness of GOD's glory then revealed to him, was after all but the surface of His infinitude. The more he saw, the deeper and wider did he know that to be which he saw not. He prayed, "If I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way, that I may know THEE, that I may find grace in Thy sight; and GOD said, My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest⁶." Moses was encouraged to ask for further blessings; he said, "I beseech THEE, show me Thy glory." This could not be granted; "Thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see ME, and live." So, as the greatest privilege which he might attain, Moses was permitted to see the skirts of GOD's greatness—"The LORD passed by in a cloud, and proclaimed the name of the LORD; and Moses made haste, and bowed his head towards the earth, and worshipped⁷." And it was this sight of the mere apparel in which GOD ALMIGHTY was arrayed, which made his face to shine.

But CHRIST really saw, and ever saw, the face of GOD, for HE

² Numb. xii. 6—8.

³ Deut. xxxiv. 10.

⁴ Exod. xxxiii. 11.

⁵ Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30, 33.

⁶ Exod. xxxiii. 13, 14.

⁷ Exod. xxxiv. 6, 8.

was no creature of GOD, but the Only-begotten SON, who is in the bosom of the FATHER. From eternity HE was with HIM in glory, as HE says HIMSELF, dwelling in the abyss of the infinite greatness of the MOST HIGH. Not for forty days, as Moses on the mount in figure, but for ever and ever was HE present as the Counsellor of GOD, as His WORD, in whom HE delighted. Such was HE of old; but at the time appointed HE came forth from the FATHER, and showed HIMSELF in this external world, first as its Creator, then as its Teacher, the Revealer of secrets, the Mediator, the Off-streaming of GOD's glory, and the Express Image of His Person. Cloud nor image, emblem nor words, are interposed between the SON and His Eternal FATHER. No language is needed between the FATHER and HIM, who is the very WORD of the FATHER; no knowledge is imparted to HIM, who by His very Nature, and from eternity knows the FATHER, and all that the FATHER knows. Such are His own words, "No man knoweth the SON but the FATHER, neither knoweth any man the FATHER, save the SON, and he to whomsoever the SON will reveal HIM⁸." Again HE says, "He that hath seen ME, hath seen the FATHER⁹;" and HE accounts for this when HE tells us, that HE and the FATHER are one¹; and that HE is in the bosom of the FATHER, and so can disclose HIM to mankind, being still in heaven, even while HE was on earth.

Accordingly, the Blessed Apostle draws a contrast between Moses and CHRIST to our comfort; "the Law," he says, "was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by JESUS CHRIST²." In HIM GOD is fully and truly seen, so that HE is absolutely the way, and the truth, and the life. All our duties are summed up for us in the message HE brings us. Those who look towards HIM for teaching, who worship and obey HIM, will by degrees see "the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD in His face," and will be "changed into the same image from glory to glory." And thus it happens that men of the lowest rank and the humblest education may know fully the ways and works of GOD; fully, that is, as man can know them; far better and more truly than the most sagacious man of this world, to whom the Gospel is hid. Religion has a store of wonderful secrets which no one

⁸ Matt. xi. 27.⁹ John xiv. 9.¹ John x. 30.² John i. 17.

can communicate to another, and which are most pleasant and delightful to know. "Call on ME," says GOD by the prophet, "and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not of." This is no mere idle boast, but a fact which all who seek GOD will find to be true, though they cannot perhaps clearly express their meaning. Strange truths about ourselves, about GOD, about our duty, about the world, about heaven and hell, new modes of viewing things, discoveries which cannot be put into words, marvellous prospects and thoughts half understood, deep convictions inspiring joy and peace, these are a part of the revelation which CHRIST, the SON of GOD, brings to those who obey HIM. Moses had much toil to gain from the great GOD some scattered rays of the truth, and that for his personal comfort, not for all Israel; but CHRIST has brought from His FATHER for all of us the full and perfect way of life. Thus HE brings grace as well as truth, a most surprising miracle of mercy from the freeness of the gift, as well as a true wisdom from its fulness.

And yet, alas! in spite of all this bounty, men called Christians, and how many! live heartlessly, not caring for the gracious benefit. Look at the world. Men begin life with sinning; they quench the early promise of grace, and defile their souls; they block up the entrances of the spiritual senses by acts of sin, lying and deceit, intemperance, profaneness, or uncleanness,—by a foolish and trifling turn of mind,—by neglect of prayer when there is no actual vice,—or by an obstinate selfishness. How many are the ways in which men begin to lose sight of GOD!—how many are the fallings away of those who once began well! And then they soon forget that they have really left GOD; they still think they see His face, though their sins have begun to blind them. Like men who fall asleep, the real prospect still flits before them in their dreams, but out of shape and proportion, discoloured, crowded with all manner of fancies and untruths; and so they proceed in that dream of sin, more or less profound,—sometimes rousing, then turning back again for a little more slumber, till death awakens them. Death alone gives lively perceptions to the generality of men, who then see the very truth, such as they saw it before they began to sin, but more clear and more fearful: but they who are the pure in heart, like Joseph;

or the meek among men, like Moses ; or faithful found among the faithless, as Daniel ; these men see God all through life in the face of His Eternal Son ; and, while the world mocks them, or tries to reason them out of their own real knowledge, they are like Moses on the mount, blessed and hidden,—“ hid with CHRIST in God,” beyond the tumult and idols of the world, and interceding for it.

3. This leads me to mention a third point of resemblance between Moses and CHRIST. Moses was the great intercessor when the Israelites sinned : while he was in the mount, his people corrupted themselves ; they set up an idol, and honoured it with feasting and dancing. Then God would have cut them off from the land of promise, had not Moses interposed. He said, “ LORD, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people ? Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people³.” In this way he gained a respite, and then he renewed his supplications. He said to the people, “ Ye have sinned a great sin ; but now I will go up unto the LORD : peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.” Then he said to their offended CREATOR, “ Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if THOU wilt, forgive their sin.”

Here Moses, as is obvious, shadows out the true Mediator between God and man, who is ever at the right hand of God making intercession for us ; but the parallel is closer still than appears at first sight. After Moses had said, “ If THOU wilt, forgive their sin,” he added, “ and if not, blot me, I pray THEE, out of Thy book, which THOU hast written.” He was taken at his word. Observe, rather than Israel should forfeit the promised land, he here offered to give up his own portion in it, and the exchange was accepted. He was excluded, dying in sight, not in enjoyment of Canaan, while the people went in under Joshua. This was a figure of HIM that was to come. Our SAVIOUR CHRIST died, that we might live : HE consented to lose the light of God’s countenance, that we might gain it. By His cross and passion, HE made atonement for our sins, and bought for us the forgiveness of God. Yet, on the other hand, observe how this history

³ Exod. xxxii. 11.

instructs us, at the same time, in the unspeakable distance between CHRIST and Moses. When Moses said, "Blot me, I pray THEE, out of Thy book," God did not promise to accept the exchange, but HE answered, "Whosoever hath sinned against ME, him will I blot out of My book." Moses was not taken instead of Israel, except in figure. In spite of Moses, the sinful people were plagued and died⁴, though their children entered the promised land. And again, Moses, after all, suffered for his own sin. True, he was shut out from Canaan. But why? Not in spite of his having "done nothing amiss," as the Divine SUFFERER on the cross, but because he spake unadvisedly with his lips, when the people provoked him with their murmurings. The meek Moses was provoked to call them rebels, and seemed to arrogate to himself the power and authority which he received from God; and therefore he was punished by dying in the wilderness. But CHRIST was the spotless LAMB of GOD, "who, when HE was reviled, reviled not again; when HE suffered, HE threatened not, but committed HIMSELF to HIM that judgeth righteously." And His death is meritorious; it has really gained our pardon.

Moreover, it is well to observe how apparently slight a fault it was for which Moses suffered; for this shows us the infinite difference between the best of a sinful race and HIM who was sinless,—the least taint of human corruption having in it an unspeakable evil. Moses was the meekest of men, yet it was for one sudden transgression of the rule of meekness that he suffered; all his former gentleness, all his habitual humbleness of mind, availed him nothing. It was unprofitable, and without merit, because it was merely his duty. It could not make up for a single sin, however slight. Thus we see how it would be with us if God were extreme to mark what is done amiss; and thus, on the other hand, we see how supremely holy and pure that SAVIOUR must be whose intercession is meritorious, who has removed from us God's anger. None can bring us to HIM but HE who came from HIM. HE reveals God, and HE cleanses man. The same is our Prophet and our Priest.

We are now approaching the season when we commemorate His

⁴ Vide Exod. xxxii. 34.

death upon the cross: we are entering upon the most holy season of the whole year. May we approach it with holy hearts! May we renew our resolutions of leading a life of obedience to His commandments, and may we have the grace to seal our good resolutions at His most sacred Supper, in which "JESUS CHRIST is evidently set forth crucified among us." It is useless to make resolves without coming to HIM for aid to keep them; and it is useless coming to His table without earnest and hearty resolves; it is provoking God "to plague us with divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death." But what shall be said of those who do neither the one nor the other,—who neither vow obedience, nor come to HIM for grace?—who sin deliberately after they have known the truth—who review their sins in time past in a reckless hard-hearted way, or put them aside out of their thoughts—who can bear to jest about them, to speak of them to others unblushingly, or even to boast of them, and to determine on sinning again,—who think of repenting at some future day, and resolve on going their own way now, trusting to chance for reconciliation with God, as if it were not a matter to be very anxious about? This state of mind brings upon a man a judgment heavier than all the plagues of Egypt,—a judgment compared with which that darkness which could be felt is the sun's brightness, and the thunders and hail are the serene sky, the wrath to come.

Awake, then, my brethren, with this season, to meet your God, who now summons you from His cross and tomb. Put aside the sin that doth so easily beset you, and be ye holy even as HE is holy. Stand ready to suffer with HIM, should it be needful, that you may rise together with HIM. HE can make bitter things sweet to you, and hard ways easy, if you have but the heart to desire HIM to do so. HE can change the Law into the Gospel. HE can, for Moses, give you HIMSELF. HE can write the Law on your hearts, and thereby take away the hand-writing that is against you, even the old curse which by nature you inherit. HE has done this for many in time past. HE does it for many at all times. Why should HE not do it for you? Why should you be left out? Why should you not enter into His rest? Why should you not see His glory? O, why should you be blotted out from His book?

SERMON CXXXVIII.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

ISAIAH liii. 7.

“HE was oppressed, and HE was afflicted, yet HE opened not His mouth; HE is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so HE openeth not His mouth.”

ST. PETER makes it almost a description of a Christian, that he loves HIM whom he has not seen; speaking of CHRIST, he says, “whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see HIM not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Again he speaks of “tasting that the LORD is gracious¹.” Unless we have a true love of CHRIST, we are not His true disciples; and we cannot love HIM unless we have heartfelt gratitude to HIM; and we cannot duly feel gratitude, unless we feel keenly what HE suffered for us. I say it seems to us impossible, under the circumstances of the case, that any one can have attained to the love of CHRIST, who feels no distress, no misery, at the thought of His bitter pains, and no self-reproach at having through his own sins had a share in causing them.

I know quite well, and wish you, my brethren, never to forget, that feeling is not enough; that it is not enough merely to feel and nothing more; that to feel grief for CHRIST’s sufferings, and yet not to go on to obey HIM, is not true love, but a mockery.

¹ 1 Pet. i. 8. ii. 3.

True love both feels right, and acts right; but at the same time as warm feelings without religious conduct are a kind of hypocrisy, so, on the other hand, right conduct, when unattended with deep feelings, is at best a very imperfect sort of religion. - And at this time of year² especially are we called upon to raise our heart to CHRIST, and to have keen feelings and piercing thoughts of sorrow and shame, of compunction and of gratitude, of love and tender affection and horror and anguish, at the review of those awful sufferings whereby our salvation has been purchased.

Let us pray God to give us *all* graces; and while, in the first place, we pray that HE would make us holy, really holy, let us also pray HIM to give us the *beauty* of holiness, which consists in tender and eager affection towards our LORD and SAVIOUR; which is in the case of the Christian, what beauty of person is to the outward man, so that through God's mercy our souls may have, not strength and health only, but a sort of bloom and comeliness; and that as we grow older in body, we may, year by year, grow more youthful in spirit.

You will ask, *how* are we to learn to feel pain and anguish at the thought of CHRIST's sufferings? I answer, *by* thinking of them, that is, by *dwelling* on the thought. This, through God's mercy, is in the power of every one. No one who will but solemnly think over the history of those sufferings, as drawn out for us in the Gospels, but will gradually gain, through God's grace, a sense of them, will in a measure realize them, will in a measure be as if he saw them, will feel towards them as being not merely a tale written in a book, but as a true history, as a series of events which took place. It is indeed a great mercy that this duty which I speak of, though so high, is notwithstanding so level with the powers of all classes of persons, learned and unlearned, if they wish to perform it. Any one can think of CHRIST's sufferings if he will; and knows well what to think about. "It is not in heaven that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us? . . . but the word is very nigh unto thee;" very nigh, for it is in the four Gospels, which, at

² Passion-tide.

this day at least, are open to all men. All men may read or hear the Gospels, and in knowing them, they will know all that is necessary to be known in order to feel aright; they will know all that any one knows, all that has been told us, all that the greatest saints have ever had to make them full of love and sacred fear.

Now, then, let me make one or two reflections by way of stirring up your hearts and making you mourn over CHRIST's sufferings, as you are called to do at this season.

1. First, as to these sufferings you will observe that our LORD is called a lamb in the text; that is, HE was as defenceless, and as innocent, as a lamb is. Since then Scripture compares HIM to this inoffensive and unprotected animal, we may without presumption or irreverence take the image as a means of conveying to our minds those feelings which our LORD's sufferings should excite in us. I mean, consider how very horrible it is to read the accounts which sometimes meet us of cruelties exercised on brute animals. Does it not sometimes make us shudder to hear tell of them, or to read them in some chance publication which we take up? At one time it is the wanton deed of barbarous and angry owners who ill-treat their cattle, or beasts of burden; and at another, it is the cold-blooded and calculating act of men of science, who make experiments on brute animals, perhaps merely from a sort of curiosity. I do not like to go into particulars, for many reasons; but one of those instances which we read of as happening in this day, and which seems more shocking than the rest, is, when the poor dumb victim is fastened against a wall, pierced, gashed, and so left to linger out its life. Now do you not see that I have a reason for saying this, and am not using these distressing words for nothing? For what was this but the very cruelty inflicted upon our LORD? HE was gashed with the scourge, pierced through hands and feet, and so fastened to the Cross, and there left, and that as a spectacle. Now what is it moves our very hearts, and sickens us so much at cruelty shown to poor brutes? I suppose this first, that they have done no harm; next, that they have no power whatever of resistance; it is the cowardice and tyranny of which they are the victims which makes their sufferings so especially touching. For instance, if they were dangerous animals, take the case of wild beasts at large, able not only to defend themselves, but even to attack us;

much as we might dislike to hear of their wounds and agony, yet our feelings would be of a very different kind; but there is something so very dreadful, so satanic in tormenting those who never have harmed us, and who cannot defend themselves; who are utterly in our power, who have weapons neither of offence nor defence, that none but very hardened persons can endure the thought of it. Now this was just our SAVIOUR's case: HE had laid aside His glory, HE had (as it were) disbanded His legions of angels, HE came on earth without arms, except the arms of truth, meekness, and righteousness, and committed HIMSELF to the world in perfect innocence and sinlessness, and in utter helplessness as the LAMB of GOD. In the words of St. Peter, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who, when HE was reviled, reviled not again; when HE suffered, HE threatened not; but committed HIMSELF to HIM that judgeth righteousness³." Think then, my brethren, of your feelings at cruelty practised upon brute animals, and you will gain one sort of feeling which the history of CHRIST's Cross and Passion ought to excite within you. And let me add, this is in all cases one good use to which you may turn any accounts you read of wanton and unfeeling acts shown towards the inferior animals; let them remind you, as a picture, of CHRIST's sufferings. HE who is higher than the angels, deigned to humble HIMSELF even to the state of the brute creation, as the Psalm says, "I am a worm, and no man; a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people⁴."

2. Take another example, and you will see the same thing still more strikingly. How overpowered should we be, nay not at the sight only, but at the very hearing of cruelties shown to a little child, and why so? for the same two reasons, because it was so innocent, and because it was so unable to defend itself. I do not like to go into the details of such cruelty, they would be so heart-rending. What if wicked men took and crucified a young child? What if they deliberately seized its poor little frame, and stretched out its arms, nailed them to a cross bar of wood, drove a stake through its two feet, and fastened them to a beam, and so left it to die? It is almost too shocking to say; perhaps, you will actually say it *is* too shock-

³ 1 Pet. ii. 22, 23.

⁴ Psalm xxii. 6.

ing, and ought not to be said. O, my brethren, you feel the horror of this, and yet you can bear to read of CHRIST's sufferings without horror; for what is that little child's agony to His? and which deserved it more? which is the more innocent? which the holier? was HE not gentler, sweeter, meeker, more tender, more loving, than any little child? Why are you shocked at the one, why are you not shocked at the other?

Or take another instance, not so shocking in its circumstances, yet introducing us to another distinction, in which CHRIST's passion exceeds that of any innocent sufferers, such as I have supposed. When Joseph was sent by his father to his brethren on a message of love, they, when they saw him, said, "Behold, this dreamer cometh; come now, therefore, and let us slay him⁵." They did not kill him, however, but they put him in a pit in spite of the anguish of his soul, and sold him as a slave to the Ishmaelites, and he was taken down into a foreign country, where he had no friends. Now this was most cruel and most cowardly in the sons of Jacob; and what is so especially shocking in it is, that Joseph was not only innocent and defenceless, their younger brother whom they ought to have protected, but besides that, he was so confiding and loving, that he need not have come to them, that he would not at all have been in their power, *except* for his desire to do them service. Now, whom does this history remind us of but of HIM concerning whom the Master of the vineyard said, when HE sent HIM to the husbandmen, "They will reverence My Son⁶?" "But when the husbandmen saw the SON, they said among themselves, This is the HEIR, come, let us kill HIM, and let us seize on His inheritance. And they caught HIM, and cast HIM out of the vineyard, and slew HIM." Here, then, is an additional circumstance of cruelty to affect us in CHRIST's history, such as is suggested in Joseph's, but which no instance of a brute animal's or of a child's sufferings can have; our LORD was not only guiltless and defenceless, but HE had come among His persecutors in love.

3. And now, instead of taking the case of the young, innocent, and confiding, let us take another instance which will present to us our LORD's passion under another aspect. Let us

⁵ Gen. xxxvii, 19, 20.

⁶ Matt. xxi. 37—39.

suppose that some aged and venerable person whom we have known as long as we could recollect any thing, and loved and revered, suppose such a one, who had often done us kindnesses, who had taught us, who had given us good advice, who had encouraged us, smiled on us, comforted us in trouble, whom we knew to be very good and religious, very holy, full of wisdom, full of heaven, with grey hairs and awful countenance, waiting for ALMIGHTY God's summons to leave this world for a better place ; suppose, I say, such a one whom we have ourselves known, and whose memory is dear to us, rudely seized by fierce men, stripped naked in public, insulted, driven about here and there, made a laughing-stock, struck, spit on, dressed up in other clothes in ridicule, then severely scourged on the back, then laden with some heavy load till he could carry it no longer, pulled and dragged about, and at last exposed with all his wounds to the gaze of a rude multitude who came and jeered him, what would be our feelings? Let us in our mind think of this person or that, or consider how we should be overwhelmed and pierced through and through by such a hideous occurrence.

But what is all this to the suffering of the holy JESUS, which we bear to read of as a matter of course! Only think of HIM, when in His wounded state, and without garment on, HE had to creep up the ladder, as HE could, which led HIM up the cross high enough for His murderers to nail HIM to it; and consider *who* it was that was in that misery. Or again, view HIM dying, hour after hour bleeding to death; and how? in peace? no; with His arms stretched out, and His face exposed to view, and any one who pleased coming and staring at HIM, mocking HIM, and watching the gradual ebbing of His strength, and the approach of death. These are some of the appalling details which the Gospels contain, and surely they were not recorded for nothing; but that we might dwell on them.

Do you think that those who saw these things had much heart for eating or drinking or enjoying themselves? On the contrary, we are told that even "the people who came together to that sight, smote their breasts and returned¹." If these were the feelings of the people, what were St. John's feelings, or St.

¹ Luke xxiii. 48.

Mary Magdalen's, or St. Mary's, our LORD's blessed mother? Do we desire to be of this company? do we desire, according to His own promise, to be rather blessed than the womb that bare HIM, and the paps that HE sucked? do we desire to be as His brother, and sister, and mother⁸? Then, surely, ought we to have some portion of that mother's sorrow! When HE was on the cross and she stood by, then, according to Simeon's prophecy, "a sword pierced through her soul⁹." What is the use of our keeping the memory of His cross and passion, unless we lament and are in sorrow with her? I can understand people who do not keep Good Friday at all; they are indeed very ungrateful, but I know what they mean; I understand them. But I do not understand at all, I do not at all see what men mean who *do* profess to keep it, yet do not sorrow, or at least try to sorrow. Such a spirit of grief and lamentation is expressly mentioned in Scripture as a characteristic of those who turn to CHRIST. If then *we* do not sorrow, have *we* turned to HIM? "I will pour upon the house of David," says the merciful SAVIOUR HIMSELF, before HE came on earth, speaking of what was to come, "upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon ME whom they have pierced, and they shall *mourn* for HIM, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for HIM, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born¹."

One thing I will add, if there be persons here present who are conscious to themselves that they do not feel the grief which this season should cause them, who feel as they do at other times, let them consider with themselves whether perhaps this defect does not arise from their having neglected to come to church, whether during this season, or at other times, as often as they might. Our feelings are not in our own power; GOD alone can rule our feelings; GOD alone can make us sorrow, when we would but cannot sorrow; but *will* HE, if we have not diligently sought HIM according to our opportunities in this house of grace? I speak of those who might come to prayers more frequently, and do not. I know well that many cannot come. I speak of those who can, if they will. Even if they come as often as they are able, I know well they will not be *satisfied* with their own feel-

⁸ Matt. xii. 46, &c.⁹ Luke ii. 35.¹ Zech. xii. 10.

ings; they will be conscious even then that they ought to grieve more than they do; of course none of us feels the great event of this day as he ought, and therefore we all *ought* to be dissatisfied with ourselves. However, if this is not our own fault, we need not be out of heart, for God will mercifully lead us forward in His own time; but if it arises from our not coming to prayers here as often as we might, then our coldness and deadness *are* our own fault, and I beg you all to consider that that fault is not a slight one. It is said in the Book of Revelation, "Behold HE cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see HIM, and they also which pierced HIM: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of HIM²." We, my brethren, every one of us, shall one day rise from our graves, and see JESUS CHRIST; we shall see HIM who hung on the cross, we shall see His wounds, we shall see the marks in His hands, and in His feet, and in His side. Do we wish to be of those, then, who wail and lament, or of those who rejoice? If we would not lament at the sight of HIM then, we must lament at the thought of HIM now. Let us prepare to meet our God; let us come into His Presence whenever we can; let us try to fancy as if we saw the cross and HIM upon it; let us draw near to it, let us beg HIM to look on us as HE did on the penitent thief, and let us say to HIM, "LORD, remember me when THOU comest in Thy kingdom³."

Let this be added now to the prayer, my brethren, with which you leave this church. After I have given the blessing, you will say to yourselves a short prayer. Well; fancy you see JESUS CHRIST on the cross, and say to HIM with the penitent thief, "LORD, remember me when THOU comest in Thy kingdom;" that is, "Remember me, LORD, in mercy, remember not my sins, but Thine own cross; remember Thine own sufferings, remember that THOU sufferedst for me, a sinner; remember in the last day that I, during my lifetime, felt Thy sufferings, that I suffered on my cross by Thy side. Remember me then, and make me remember THEE now."

² Rev. i. 7.

³ Luke xxiii. 42.

SERMON CXXXIX.

ATTENDANCE ON HOLY COMMUNION.

JOHN v. 40.

“Ye will not come to ME, that ye might have life.”

ST. John tells us in to-day's epistle ¹ that “GOD hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His SON. He that hath the SON hath life, and he that hath not the SON hath not life.” Yet in the text the SON HIMSELF, our SAVIOUR, sorrowfully and solemnly expostulates with His own brethren, “Ye will not come to ME, that ye might have life.” “HE came unto His own, and His own received HIM not.” We know from history, as a matter of fact, that they did not receive HIM, that they did not come to HIM when HE came to them; but HE says in the text that they would not come, that they did not wish to come, implying that they, and none else but they, were the cause of their not coming.

Does it not seem a plain natural instinct that every one should seek his own good? What then is meant by this unwillingness to come for the greatest of goods, life; an unwillingness, which, guided by the light of Scripture and by experience, we can confidently affirm to prevail at this day as widely and as fully as in the age in which CHRIST said it?

¹ First Sunday after Easter.

Here is no question of a comparison of good with good. We cannot account for this unconcern about CHRIST's gift, by alleging that we have a sufficient treasure in our hands already, and therefore are not interested by the news of a greater. Far from it; for is not the world continually taking away its own gifts, whatever they are? and does it not thereby remind us, does it not importunately press upon us, and weary us with the lesson of its own nothingness? Do we not confess that eternal life is the best of all conceivable gifts, before which none other deserve to be mentioned? yet we live to the world.

Nay, sin also warns us not to trust its allurements; like the old prophet of Bethel, it is forced to bear witness against itself, and in the name of the LORD to denounce the LORD's judgments upon us. While it seduces us, it stings us with remorse; and even when the sense of guilt is overcome, still the misery of sinning is inflicted on us in the inward disappointments and the temporal punishments which commonly follow upon transgression. Yet we will not come unto Christ that we may have life.

Further, it is not that GOD treats us as servants or slaves; HE does not put a burden on us above our strength: HE does not repel us from His Presence till we have prepared some offering to bring before HIM, or have made some good progress in the way of life. No; HE has begun His dealings with us with special, spontaneous acts of mercy. HE has, by an inconceivable goodness, sent His SON to be our life. Far from asking any gift at our hands in the first instance, HE has from our infancy taken us in charge, and freely given us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." HE has been urgent with us in the very morning of our days, and by the fulness of His grace has anticipated the first stirrings of pride and lust, while as yet sin slept within us. Is it not so? What more could have been done for us? Yet, in spite of all this, men will not come unto HIM that they may have life.

So strange is this, that thoughtful persons are sometimes tempted to suppose that the mass of mankind do not sufficiently know what their duty is; that they need teaching, or they would be obedient. And others fancy that if the doctrines of the Gospel were set before them in a forcible or persuasive manner, this would serve as a means of rousing them to an habitual sense of

their true state. But ignorance is not the true cause why men will not come to CHRIST.

Who are these willing outcasts from CHRIST's favour, of whom I speak? Do not think I say a strong thing, my brethren, when I tell you that I am speaking of some of those who now hear me. Not that I dare draw the line any where, or imagine that I can give any rule for knowing for certain, just who come to HIM in heart and spirit, and who do not; but I am quite sure that many, who would shrink from giving up their interest in the Gospel, and who profess to cast their lot with CHRIST, and to trust in His death for their salvation, nevertheless do not really seek HIM that they may have life, in spite of their fair speeches. This I say I am too well enabled to know, because in fact so it is, that HE has shown us *how* to come to HIM, and I see that men do *not* come to HIM in that way which HE has pointed out. HE has shown us, that to come to HIM for life is a literal bodily action; not a mere figure, not a mere movement of the heart towards HIM, but an action of the visible limbs; not a mere secret faith, but a coming to church, a passing on along the aisle to His holy table, a kneeling down there before HIM, and a receiving of the gift of eternal life in the form of bread and wine. There can be no mistaking His own appointment. HE said indeed, "He that cometh to ME shall never hunger;" but then HE explained what this coming was, by adding, "He that eateth ME, even he shall live by ME." If then a man does not seek HIM where HE is, there is no profit in seeking HIM where HE is not. What is the good of sitting at home seeking HIM, when His Presence is in the holy Eucharist? Such perverseness is like the sin of the Israelites who went to seek for the manna at a time when it was not given. May not HE who gives the gift, prescribe the place and mode of giving it?

Observe how plain and cogent is the proof of what I have been saying. Our LORD declares, "Except ye eat the flesh of the SON of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you:" no life, life being the gift HE offers in the text; also HE says of the bread which HE had broken, "*This* is My Body;" and of the cup, "*This* is My Blood:" is it not very plain, then, that if we refuse to eat that Bread, and drink that Cup, we are refusing to come unto HIM that we may have life?

The true reason why people will not come to this Holy Communion is this,—they do not wish to lead religious lives; they do not like to promise to lead religious lives; and they think that that blessed sacrament does bind them to do so, bind them to live very much more strictly and thoughtfully than they do at present. Allow as much as we will for proper distrust of themselves, reasonable awe, the burden of past sin, imperfect knowledge, and other causes, still after all there is in most cases a reluctance to bear, or at least to pledge themselves to bear, CHRIST's yoke; a reluctance to give up the service of sin once for all; a lingering love of their own ease, of their own will, of indolence, of carnal habits, of the good opinion of men whom they do not respect; a distrust of their perseverance in holy resolves, grounded on a misgiving about their present sincerity. This is why men will not come to CHRIST for life; they know that HE will not impart HIMSELF to them, unless they consent to devote themselves to HIM.

In what way does HE offer HIMSELF to them in Holy Communion? through the commands and sanctions of the Law. First, we are warned against secret sin, and called to self-examination; a week's preparation follows; then, when the time of celebration is come, we hear the Commandments read, we are solemnly exhorted to put off every thing which may offend GOD; we confess our sins and our deep sorrow for them; lastly, after being admitted to the Sacrament, we expressly bind ourselves to the service of our LORD and SAVIOUR. Doubtless *this* it is which the unrenewed heart cannot bear, the very notion of giving up sin altogether and once for all. And thus, though a gracious voice cry ever so distinctly from the altar, "Come unto ME, and I will refresh you;" and though it be ever so true that this refreshment is nothing short of life, eternal life, yet we recollect the words which follow, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of ME," and we forthwith murmur and complain, as if the gift were most ungracious, laden with conditions, and hardly purchased, merely because it is offered in that way in which alone a righteous LORD could offer it,—the way of righteousness.

Men had rather give up the promise than implicate themselves in the threats which surround it. Bright and attractive as is the

treasure presented to us in the Gospel, still the pearl of great price lies in its native depths, at the bottom of the ocean. We see it indeed, and know its worth; but not many dare plunge in to bring it thence. What reward offered to the diver shall overcome the imminent peril of a frightful death? and those who love sin, and whose very life consists in habits and practices short of religious, what promised prize can reconcile them to the certain destruction of what they delight in, the necessary annihilation of all their most favourite indulgences and enjoyments which are contrary to the rule of the Gospel? Let us not suppose that any exhortations will induce such men to change their conduct; they confess the worth of the soul, their obligation to obey, and their peril if they do not; yet, for all this, the present sacrifice required of them is too much for them. They may be told of their LORD's love for them, His self-denying mercy when on earth, His free gifts, and His long-suffering since; they will not be influenced; and why? because the fault is in their heart; they do not like GOD's service. *They* know full well what they would have, if they might choose. CHRIST is said to have done all things for us; "Far from it," say they, "HE is not a Mediator suited to our case. Give life, give holiness, give truth, give a SAVIOUR to deliver from sin; this is not enough: no, *we* want a SAVIOUR to deliver *in* sin. This is our need. It is a small thing to offer us life, if it be in the way of GOD's commandments; it is a mockery of our hopes to call that a free gift, which is, in fact, a heavy yoke. We want to do nothing at all, and then the gift will be free indeed. If our hearts *must* be changed to fit us for heaven, let them be changed, only let us have no trouble in the work ourselves. Let the change be part of the work done for us; let us literally be clay in the hands of the potter; let us sleep, and dream, and wake in the morning new men; let us have no fear and trembling, no working out salvation, no self-denial. Let CHRIST suffer, but be it ours to rejoice only. What we wish is, to be at ease; we wish to have every thing our own way; we wish to enjoy both this world and the next; we wish to be happy all at once. If the Gospel promises this, we accept it; but if not, it is but a bondage, it has no persuasives, it will receive no acceptance from us." Such is the language of men's hearts, though

their tongues do not utter it; language most unthankful, most profane, most sinful.

These reflections I recommend to the serious attention of those who live in neglect of Holy Communion; but, alas! I must not quit the subject without addressing some cautions to those who are in the observance of it. I would that none of us had need of cautions; but the best of us is in warfare, and on his trial, and none of us can be the worse for them. I need not remind you, my brethren, that there is a peril attached to the unworthy reception; for this is the very excuse which many plead for not receiving; but it often happens, as in other matters also, that men have fears when they should not fear, and do not fear when they should fear. A slight consideration will show this; for what is the danger in communicating? that of coming to it, as St. Paul implies, *without* fear. It is evident then, that, in spite of what was just now said, when persons are in danger of receiving it unworthily, they commonly do not really feel their danger; for their very danger consists in their not fearing. If they did truly and religiously fear the blessed sacrament, so far they would not be in danger of an unworthy reception.

Now it is plain when it is that persons are in danger of receiving it fearlessly and thoughtlessly; not when they receive it for the first time, but when they have often received it, when they are in the habit of receiving it. This is the dangerous time.

When a Christian first comes to Holy Communion, he comes with awe and anxiety. At least, I will not suppose the case of a person so little in earnest about his soul, and so profane, as to despise the ordinance when he first attends it. Perhaps he has no clear doctrinal notion of the sacred rite, but the very title of it, as the Sacrament of his Lord's Body and Blood, suffices to make him serious. Let us believe that he examines himself, and prays for grace to receive the gift worthily; and he feels at the time of celebration and afterwards, that, having bound himself more strictly to a religious life, and received divine influences, he has more to answer for. But after he has repeated his attendance several times, this fear and reverence wear away with the novelty. As he begins to be familiar with the words of the prayers, and the order of the Service, so does he both hear and receive with less emotion and solemnity. It is not

that he is a worse man than he was at first, but he is exposed to a greater temptation to be profane. He had no deeper religious principle when he first communicated than he has now, (probably not so deep,) but his want of acquaintance with the Service kept him from irreverence, indifference, and wandering thoughts: but now this accidental safeguard is removed, and as he has not succeeded in acquiring any habitual reverence from former seasons of communicating, no clear knowledge of the nature of the Sacrament to warn and check him, he is exposed to his own ordinary hardness of heart and unbelief, in circumstances much more perilous than those in which they are ordinarily displayed. If it is a sin to neglect GOD in the world, it is a greater sin to neglect HIM in church. Now is the time when he is in danger of not discerning the LORD'S Body, of receiving the gift of life as a thing of course, without awe, gratitude, and self-abasement. And the more constant he is in his attendance at the sacred rite, the greater will be his risk; his *risk*, I say; that is, if he neglects to be jealous over himself, to watch himself narrowly, and to condemn and hate in himself the faintest risings of coldness and irreverence; for, of course, if he so acts, the less will be his risk, and the greater will be his security that his heart will not betray him. But I speak of those who are not sufficiently aware of their danger, and these are many.

Here, too, let me mention another sin of a similar character into which communicants are apt to fall; *viz.* a forgetfulness after communicating that they have communicated. Even when we resist the coldness which frequent communion may occasion, and strive to possess our minds in as profound a seriousness as we felt when the rite was new to us, even then there is often a painful difference between our feelings before we have attended it, and after. We are diligent in preparation, we are careless in retrospect; we dismiss from our memory what we cherished in our expectations; we forget that we ever hoped and feared. But consider; when we have solemn thoughts about Holy Communion only till we have come to it, what does this imply, but that we imagine that we have received the benefit of it once for all, as a thing done and over, and that there is nothing more to seek? This is but a formal way of worshipping; as if we had wiped off

a writing which was against us, and there was an end of the matter. But blessed are those servants who are ever expecting HIM, who is ever coming to them; whether HE come "at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning;" whereas those who first come to HIM for the gift of grace, and then neglect to wait for its progressive accomplishment in their hearts, how profanely they act! it is as if to receive the blessing in mockery, and then to cast it away. Surely, after so great a privilege, we ought to behave ourselves as if we had partaken some divine food and medicine, (if great things may be compared to ordinary,) which, in its own inscrutable way, and in its own good time, will "prosper in the thing whereunto God sends it"—the fruit of the tree of life which Adam forfeited, which had that virtue in it, that it was put out of his reach in haste, lest he should take and eat, and live for ever. How earnest, then, should be our care lest this gracious treasure which we carry within us should be lost by our own fault, by the unhealthy excitements, or the listless indolence, to which our nature invites us! "Quench not the SPIRIT," says the Apostle; surely our privilege is a burden heavy to bear, before it turn to a principle of life and strength, till CHRIST be formed in us perfectly; and we the while, what cause have we to watch, and pray, and fulfil all righteousness, till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts!

Nor let us suppose that by once or twice seeking God in this gracious ordinance, we can secure the gift for ever: "Seek the LORD and His strength, seek His face evermore." The bread which comes down from heaven is like the manna, "*daily bread*," and that "till HE come," till His "kingdom come." In His coming at the end of the world, all our wishes and prayers rest and are accomplished; and in His present communion we have a stay and consolation meanwhile, joining together the past and future, reminding us that HE has come once, and promising us that HE will come again. Who can live any time in the world, pleasant as it may seem on first entering it, without discovering that it is a weariness, and that if this life is worth any thing, it is because it is the passage to another? It needs no great religion to feel this; it is a self-evident truth to those who have much experience of the world. The only reason why all do not feel it is, that they have not lived long enough to feel it; and those who feel it more

than others, have but been thrown into circumstances to feel it more. But while the times wax old, and the colours of earth fade, and the voice of song is brought low, and all kindreds of the earth can but wail and lament, the sons of God lift up their heads, for their salvation draweth nigh. Nature fails, the sun shines not, and the moon is dim, the stars fall from heaven, and the foundations of the round world shake ; but the altar's light burns ever brighter ; there are sights there which the many cannot see, and all above the tumults of earth the command is heard to show forth the LORD's death, and the promise that the LORD is coming.

"Happy are the people that are in such a case !" who, when wearied of the things seen, can turn with good hope to the things unseen ; yea, "blessed are the people who have the LORD for their God !" "Come unto ME," HE says, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Rest is better than toil ; peace satisfies, and quietness disappoints not. These are sure goods. Such is the calm of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all ; and such is their calm worship, the foretaste of heaven, who for a season shut themselves out from the world, and seek HIM in invisible Presence, whom they shall hereafter see face to face.

SERMON CXL.

THE GOSPEL FEAST.

JOHN vi. 5.

“ When JESUS then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto HIM, HE saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat ?”

AFTER these words the Evangelist adds, “ And this HE said to prove him, for HE HIMSELF knew what HE would do.” Thus, you see, our LORD had secret meanings when HE spoke, and did not bring forth openly all His divine sense at once. HE knew what HE was about to do from the first, but HE wished to lead forward His disciples, and to arrest and open their minds, before HE instructed them : for all cannot receive His words, and on the blind and deaf the most sacred truths fall without profit.

And thus, throughout the course of His gracious dispensations from the beginning, it may be said that the Author and Finisher of our faith has hid things from us in mercy, and listened to our questionings, while HE HIMSELF knew what HE was about to do. HE has hid, in order afterwards to reveal, that then, on looking back on what HE said and did before, we may see in it what at the time we did not see, and thereby see it to more profit. Thus HE hid HIMSELF from the disciples as HE walked with them to Emmaus : thus Joseph, too, under different and yet similar circumstances, hid himself from his brethren.

With this thought in our minds, surely we seem to see a new and further meaning still, in the narrative before us. CHRIST spoke of *buying* bread, when HE intended to create or make bread; but did HE not, in that bread which HE made, intend further that Heavenly bread which is the salvation of our souls?—for HE goes on to say, “Labour not for the meat” or food “which perisheth, but for that food which endureth unto everlasting life, which the SON of man shall give unto you.” Yes, surely the wilderness is the world, and the Apostles are His priests, and the multitudes are His people; and that feast, so suddenly, so unexpectedly provided, is the Holy Communion. HE alone is the same, HE the provider of the loaves then, of the heavenly manna now. All other things change, but HE remaineth.

And what is that Heavenly Feast we now are vouchsafed, but in its own turn the earnest and pledge of that future feast in His FATHER’s kingdom, when “the marriage of the LAMB shall come, and His wife hath made herself ready,” and “holy Jerusalem cometh down from GOD out of heaven,” and “blessed shall they be who shall eat bread in the kingdom of GOD?”

And further, since to that Feast above we do lift up our eyes, though it will not come till the end; and as we do not make remembrance of it once only, but continually, in the sacred rite which foreshadows it; therefore, in like manner, not in the miracle of the loaves only, though in that especially, but in all parts of Scripture, in history, and in precept, and in promise, and in prophecy, is it given us to see the Gospel Feast typified and prefigured, and that immortal and never-failing Supper in the visible presence of the LAMB which will follow upon it at the end. And if they are blessed who shall eat and drink of that table in the kingdom, so too blessed are they who meditate upon it, and hope for it *now*,—who read Scripture with it in their thoughts, and endeavour to look beneath the veil of the literal text, and to catch a sight of the gleams of heavenly light which are behind it. “Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, but have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” “Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have.

believed." Blessed they who see in and by believing, and who have, because they doubt not.

Let us, then, at this time of year¹, as is fitting, follow the train of thought thus opened upon us, and, looking back into the Sacred Volume, trace the intimations and promises there given of that sacred and blessed Feast of CHRIST'S Body and Blood which it is our privilege now to enjoy till the end come.

Now the Old Testament, as we know, is full of figures and types of the Gospel; types various, and, in their literal wording, contrary to each other, but all meeting and harmoniously fulfilled in CHRIST and His Church. Thus the histories, of the Israelites in the wilderness, and of the Israelites when settled in Canaan, alike are ours, representing our present state as Christians. Our Christian course is a state of faith and trial; it is also a state of enjoyment. It has the richness of the promised land; it has the marvellousness of the desert. It is a "good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of vallies and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness; thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." And, on the other hand, it is still a land which to the natural man seems a wilderness, a "great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there is no water;" where faith is still necessary, and where, still more forcibly than in the case of Israel, the maxim holds, that "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live."

This is the state in which we are,—a state of faith and of possession. In the desert the Israelites lived by the signs of things, without the realities: manna was to stand for the corn, oil, and honey, of the good land promised; water, for the wine and milk. It was a time for faith to exercise itself; and when they came into the promised land, that was the time of possession. It was the land of milk and honey; they needed not any divinely provided compensations or expedients. Manna was not needed, nor the

¹ Easter.

pillar of the cloud, nor the water from the rock. But we Christians, on the contrary, are at once in the wilderness and in the promised land. In the wilderness, because we live amid wonders; in the promised land, because we are in a state of enjoyment. That we are in the state of enjoyment is surely certain, unless all the prophecies have failed; and that we are in a state in which faith alone has that enjoyment, is plain from the fact that God's great blessings are not seen, and in that the Apostle says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." In a word, we are in a supernatural state,—a word which implies both its greatness and its secretness: for what is above nature, is at once not seen, and is more precious than what is seen; "the things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal."

And if our state altogether is parallel to that of the Israelites, as an antitype to its type, it is natural to think that so great a gift as Holy Communion would not be without its appropriate figures and symbols in the Old Testament. All that our SAVIOUR has done is again and again shadowed out in the Old Testament; and this, therefore, as is natural to think, as well as other things: His miraculous birth, His life, His teaching, His death, His priesthood, His sacrifice, His resurrection, His glorification, His kingdom, are again and again prefigured: it is not reasonable to suppose that if this so great gift is really given us, it should be omitted. HE who died for us, is HE who feeds us; and as His death is mentioned, so we may beforehand expect will be mentioned the feast HE gives us. Not openly indeed, for neither are His death and His priesthood taught openly, but covertly, under the types of David or Aaron, or other favoured servants of God; and in like manner we might expect, and we shall find, the like reverent allusions to His most gracious Feast,—allusions which we should not know to *be* allusions but for the event; just as we should not know that Solomon, Aaron, or Samuel, stood for CHRIST at all, except that the event explains the figure. When Abraham said to Isaac, "God will provide HIMSELF a lamb for a burnt offering," who can doubt this is a prophecy concerning CHRIST?—yet we are no where told it in Scripture. The case is the same as regards the sacrament of Baptism. Now that it is given, we cannot doubt that the purifications of the Jews, Naaman's bathing, and the prophecy of a fountain being opened for

sin and all uncleanness, have reference to it, as being the visible fulfilment of the great spiritual cleansing: and St. Peter expressly affirms this of the Deluge, and St. Paul of the passage of the Red Sea. And in like manner passages in the Bible, which speak prophetically of the Gospel Feast, cannot but refer (if I may so speak) to the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as being, in fact, the Feast given us under the Gospel.

And let it be observed, directly we know that we have this great gift, and that the Old Testament history prefigures it, we have a light thrown upon what otherwise is a difficulty; for, it may be asked with some speciousness, whether the Jews were not in a higher state of privilege than we Christians, until we take this gift into account. It may be objected that our blessings are all future or distant,—the hope of eternal life, which is to be fulfilled hereafter, God's forgiveness, who is in heaven: what do we gain now and here above the Jews? God loved the Jews, and *He gave* them something; *He gave* them present gifts; the Old Testament is full of the description of them; *He gave* them “the precious things of heaven, and the dew, and the deep that coucheth beneath, and precious things brought forth by the sun, and by the moon, and the chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills, and the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof,” “honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat, and the pure blood of the grape².” These were present real blessings. What has *He given us*?—*nothing* in possession? *all* in promise? This, I say, is in itself not likely; it is not likely that *He* should so reverse His system, and make the Gospel inferior to the Law. But the knowledge of the great gift under consideration clears up this perplexity; for every passage in the Old Testament which speaks of the temporal blessings God gave His ancient people, instead of conveying to us a painful sense of destitution, and exciting our jealousy, reminds us of our greater blessedness; for every passage which belongs to them is fulfilled now in a higher sense to us. We have no need to envy them. God did not take away

² Deut. xxxii. 13; xxxiii. 13—15.

their blessings, without giving us greater. The Law was not so much taken away, as the Gospel given. The Gospel supplanted the Law. The Law went out by the Gospel's coming in. Only our blessings are not seen; *therefore* they are higher, *because* they are unseen. Higher blessings could not be visible. How could spiritual blessings be visible ones? If CHRIST now feeds us, not with milk and honey, but "with the spiritual food of His most precious Body and Blood;" if "our sinful bodies are made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most precious Blood," truly we are not without our precious things, any more than Israel was: but they are unseen, because so much greater, so spiritual; they are given only under the veil of what is seen: and thus we Christians are both with the Church in the wilderness as regards faith, and in the Church in Canaan as regards enjoyment; having the fulfilment of the words spoken by Moses, repeated by our LORD, to which I just now referred, "Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Now, then, I will refer to some passages of both the Old Testament and New, which both illustrate and are illustrated by this great doctrine of the Gospel.

1. And, first, let it be observed, from the beginning, the greatest rite of religion has been a feast; the partaking of God's bounties, in the way of nature, has been consecrated to a more immediate communion with GOD HIMSELF. For instance, when Isaac was weaned, Abraham "made a great feast³," and then it was that Sarah prophesied; "Cast out this bondswoman and her son," she said, prophesying the introduction of the spirit, grace, and truth, which the Gospel contains, instead of the bondage of the outward forms of the Law. Again, it was at a feast of savoury meat that the spirit of prophecy came upon Isaac, and he blessed Jacob. In like manner the first beginning of our LORD's miracles was at a marriage feast, when HE changed water into wine; and when St. Matthew was converted he entertained our LORD at a feast. At a feast, too, our LORD allowed the penitent woman to wash with tears and anoint His feet, and pronounced her forgiveness; and at a feast, before His passion, HE allowed

³ Gen. xxi. 10.

Mary to anoint them with costly ointment, and to wipe them with her hair. Thus with our LORD, and with the Patriarchs, a feast was a time of grace; so much so, that HE was said by the Pharisees to come eating and drinking, to be "a winebibber and gluttonous, a friend of publicans and sinners⁴."

2. And next, in order to make this feasting still more solemn, it had been usual at all times to precede it by a direct act of religion,—by a prayer, or blessing, or sacrifice, or by the presence of a priest, which implied it. Thus, when Melchizedek came out to meet Abraham, and *bless* him, "he brought forth bread and wine⁵;" to which it is added, "and he was the priest of the Most High God." Such, too, was the lamb of the Passover, which was eaten roast with fire, and with unleavened bread, and bitter herbs, with girded loins and shoes on, and staff in hand; as the LORD's Passover, being a solemn religious feast, even if not a sacrifice. And such seems to have been the common notion of communion with God all the world over, however gained; *viz.* that we arrive at the possession of His invisible gifts by participation in His visible; that there was some mysterious connexion between the seen and the unseen; and that, by setting aside the choicest of His earthly bounties, as a specimen and representative of the whole, presenting it to HIM for His blessing, and then taking, eating, and appropriating it, we had the best hope of gaining those unknown and indefinite gifts which human nature needs. This the heathen practised towards their idols also; and St. Paul seems to acknowledge that in that way they did communicate, though most miserably and fearfully, with those idols, and with the evil spirits which they represented. "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should hold communion with devils⁶." Here, as before, a feast is spoken of as the means of communicating with the unseen world, though, when the feast was idolatrous, it was the fellowship of evil spirits.

3. And next let this be observed, that the descriptions in the Old Testament of the perfect state of religious privilege, *viz.* that of the Gospel state which was to come, are continually made under the image of a feast, a feast of some special and choice goods

⁴ Matt. xi. 19. Luke vii. 34.

⁵ Gen. xiv. 18.

⁶ 1 Cor. x. 20.

of this world, corn, wine, and the like ; goods of this world chosen from the mass as a specimen of all, as types and means of seeking, and means of obtaining, the unknown spiritual blessings, which “ eye hath not seen nor ear heard.” And these special goods of nature, so set apart, are more frequently than any thing else, corn or bread, and wine, as the figures of what was greater, though others are mentioned also. Now the first of these of which we read is the fruit of the tree of life, the leaves of which are also mentioned in the prophets. The tree of life was that tree in the garden of Eden, the eating of which would have made Adam immortal ; a divine gift lay hid in an outward form. The prophet Ezekiel speaks of it afterwards in the following words, showing that a similar blessing was in store for the redeemed :—

“ By the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side, and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed. It shall bring forth new fruits according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary ; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine⁷.” Like to which is St. John’s account of the tree of life, “ which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month ; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations⁸.” And hence we read in the Canticles of the apple-tree, and of sitting down under its shadow, and its fruit being sweet to the taste. Here then in type is signified the sacred gift of which I am speaking ; and yet it has not seemed good to the gracious GIVER literally to select fruit or leaves as the means of His invisible blessings. HE might have spiritually fed us with such, had HE pleased—for man liveth not by bread only, but by the word of His mouth. His word might have made the fruit of the earth His sacrament, but HE has willed otherwise.

The next selection of gifts of the earth which we find in Scripture, is the very one which HE at length fixed on, bread and wine, as in the history of Melchizedek ; and there the record stands as a prophecy of what was to be : for who is Melchizedek but our LORD and SAVIOUR, and what is the Bread and Wine but the very feast which HE has ordained ?

⁷ Ezek. xlvii. 12.

⁸ Rev. xxii. 2.

Next the great gift was shadowed out in the description of the promised land, which was said to flow with milk and honey, and in all those other precious things of nature which I have already recounted as belonging to the promised land, oil, butter, corn, wine, and the like. These all may be considered to refer to the Gospel feast typically, because they were the rarest and most exquisite of the blessings given to the Jews, as the Gospel Feast is the most choice and most sacred of all the blessings given to us Christians; and what is most precious under the one dispensation is signified by what is most precious under the other.

Now let us proceed to the prophets, and we shall find the like anticipation of the Gospel Feast.

For instance, Hosea says: "It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear (that is, answer), saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto ME in the earth⁹." By Jezreel is meant the Christian Church; and the Prophet declares in God's name, that the time was to come when the Church would call upon the corn, wine, and oil, and they would call on the earth, and the earth on the heavens, and the heavens on God; and God should answer the heavens, and the heavens should answer the earth, and the earth should answer the corn, wine, and oil, and they should answer to the wants of the Church. Now, doubtless, this may be fulfilled only in a general way; but considering ALMIGHTY GOD has appointed corn or bread, and wine, to be the special instruments of His ineffable grace; HE, who sees the end from the beginning, and who views all things in all their relations at once, HE, when HE spoke of corn and wine, knew that the word would be fulfilled, not generally only, but even literally in the Gospel.

Again: the prophet Joel says, "It shall come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim¹." How strikingly is this fulfilled, if we take it to apply to what God has given us in the Gospel, in the feast of the Holy Communion!

⁹ Hos. ii, 21—23.

¹ Joel iii, 18.

Again: the prophet Amos says: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes, him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt²;" that is, with God's marvellous grace, whereby HE gives us gifts new and wonderful.

And the prophet Isaiah: "In this mountain shall the LORD of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." And again: "Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies, and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured; but they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD, and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of My holiness." And again: "Behold My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold My servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty³."

Again: the prophet Jeremiah says: "They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd; and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all . . . And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the LORD⁴."

And the prophet Zechariah: "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids⁵."

And under a different image, but with the same general sense, the prophet Malachi: "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, My Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My Name, and a pure offering, for My Name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of Hosts⁶."

Further, if the Psalms are intended for Christian worship, as surely they are, the Prophetic Spirit, who inspired them, saw that they too would in various places describe that sacred Christian feast, which we feel they do describe; and surely we may rightly

² Amos ix. 13.

³ Isa. xxv. 6. lxii. 8, 9. lxxv. 13.

⁴ Jer. xxxi. 12—14.

⁵ Zech. ix. 17.

⁶ Mal. i. 11.

call this coincidence between the ordinance in the Christian Church and the form of words in the Psalms, a mark of design. For instance: "THOU shalt prepare a Table before me against them that trouble me. THOU hast anointed my head with oil, and my Cup shall be full." "I will wash my hands in innocency, O LORD, and so will I go to Thine Altar." "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling; and that I may go unto the Altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness." "The children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of Thy house, and THOU shalt give them drink of Thy pleasures as out of the river. For with THEE is the well of life, and in Thy light shall we see light." "Blessed is the man whom THOU choosest and receivest unto THEE; he shall dwell in Thy court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy house, even of Thy Holy Temple." "My soul shall be satisfied, even as it were with marrow and fatness, when my mouth praiseth THEE with joyful lips . . . because THOU hast been my helper, therefore under the shadows of Thy wings will I rejoice⁷."

The same wonderful feast is put before us in the book of Proverbs, where Wisdom stands for CHRIST. "Wisdom hath builded her house," that is, CHRIST has built His Church; "she hath hewn out her seven pillars, she hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine (that is, CHRIST has prepared His Supper), she hath also furnished her table (that is, the LORD's Table), she hath sent forth her maidens (that is, the priests of the LORD), she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither; as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of My Bread and drink of the Wine which I have mingled⁸,"—which is like saying, "Come unto ME all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will refresh you." Like which are the prophet Isaiah's words: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price⁹." And such too is the description in the book of Canticles: "The fig tree putteth forth her green figs,

⁷ Ps. xxiii. 5. xxvi. 6. xxxvi. 7—9. xliii. 3, 4. lxx. 4. lxiii. 6—8.

⁸ Prov. ix. 1—5.

⁹ Is. lv. 1.

and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell"
 "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense" . . . "I have gathered My myrrh with My spice, I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey, I have drunk My wine with My milk; eat, O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved¹!" In connexion with such passages as these should be observed St. Paul's words, which seem from the antithesis to be an allusion to the same most sacred ordinance: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the SPIRIT," with that new wine which GOD the HOLY SPIRIT ministereth in the Supper of the Great KING.

GOD grant that we may be able ever to come to this Blessed Sacrament with feelings suitable to the passages which I have read concerning it! May we not regard it in a cold, heartless way, and keep at a distance from fear, when we should rejoice! May the spirit of the unprofitable servant never be ours, who looked at his lord as a hard master instead of a gracious benefactor! May we not be in the number of those who go on year after year, and never approach HIM at all! May we not be of those who went, one to his farm, another to his merchandize, when they were called to the wedding! Nor let us be of those, who come in a formal, mechanical way, as a mere matter of obligation, without reverence, without awe, without wonder, without love. Nor let us fall into the sin of those who complained that they have nothing to gather but the manna, wearying of God's gifts.

But let us come in faith and hope, and let us say to ourselves, May this be the beginning to us of everlasting bliss! May these be the first fruits of that banquet which is to last for ever and ever; ever new, ever transporting, inexhaustible, in the city of our GOD!

¹ Cant. ii. 13. iv. 6. v. 1.

S E R M O N C X L I .

LOVE OF RELIGION, A NEW NATURE.

ROMANS vi. 8.

“ If we be dead with CHRIST, we believe that we shall also live with HIM.”

To be dead with CHRIST, is to hate and turn from sin ; and to live with HIM, is to have our hearts and minds turned towards God and Heaven. To be dead to sin, is to feel a disgust at it. We know what is meant by disgust. Take, for instance, the case of a sick man, when food of a certain kind is presented to him,—and there is no doubt what is meant by disgust. Consider how certain scents, which are too sweet or too strong, or certain tastes, affect persons under certain circumstances, or always,—and you will be at no loss to determine what is meant by disgust at sin, or deadness to sin. On the other hand, consider how pleasant a meal is to the hungry, or some enlivening odour to the faint ; how refreshing the air is to the languid, or the brook to the weary and thirsty ;—and you will understand the sort of feeling which is implied in being alive with CHRIST, alive to religion, alive to the thought of heaven. Our animal powers cannot exist in all atmospheres ; certain airs are poisonous, others life-giving. So is it with spirits and souls : an unrenewed spirit could not live in heaven, he would die ; an Angel could not live in hell. The natural man cannot live in heavenly company, and the angelic soul would pine and waste away in the company of sinners, unless God’s sacred presence were continued

to it. To be dead to sin, is to be so minded, that the atmosphere of sin (if I may so speak) oppresses, distresses, and stifles us,—that it is painful and unnatural to us to remain in it. To be alive with Christ, is to be so minded, that the atmosphere of heaven refreshes, enlivens, stimulates, invigorates us. To be alive, is not merely to bear the thought of religion, to assent to the truth of religion, to wish to be religious; but to be drawn towards it, to love it, to delight in it, to obey it. Now I suppose most persons called Christians do not go farther than this,—to wish to be religious, and to think it right to be religious, and to feel a respect for religious men; they do not go so far as to have any sort of love for religion.

So far, however, they do go; not, indeed, to do their duty and to love it, but to have a sort of wish that they did. I suppose there are few persons but, at the very least, now and then feel the wish to be holy and religious. They bear witness to the excellence of virtuous and holy living, they consent to all that their teachers tell them, what they hear in church, and read in religious books; but all this is a very different thing from acting according to their knowledge. They confess one thing, they do another.

Nay, they confess one thing *while* they do another. Even sinners,—wilful, abandoned sinners,—if they would be honest enough to speak as they really in their hearts feel, would own, while they are indulging in the pleasures of sin, while they idle away the Lord's Day, or while they keep bad company, or while they lie or cheat, or while they drink to excess, or do any other bad thing,—they would confess, I say, did they speak their minds, that it is a far happier thing, even at present, to live in obedience to God, than in obedience to Satan. Not that sin has not its pleasures, such as they are; I do not mean, of course, to deny that,—I do not deny that Satan is able to give us something in exchange for future and eternal happiness; I do not say that irreligious men do not gain pleasures, which religious men are obliged to lose. I know they do; if they did not, there would be nothing to tempt and try us. But, after all, the pleasures which the servants of Satan enjoy, though pleasant, are always attended by pain too; by a bitterness, which, though it does not destroy the pleasure, yet is by itself sufficient to make

it far less pleasant, even while it lasts, than such pleasures as are without such bitterness, viz. the pleasures of religion. This, then, alas! is the state of multitudes; not to be dead to sin and alive to God, but just to have so much sense of heaven, as not to be able to enjoy sin and the world, while they are alive to them.

I say, when any one, man or woman, young or old, is conscious that he or she is going wrong, whether in greater matter or less, whether in not coming to church when there is no good excuse, neglecting private prayer, living carelessly, or indulging in known sin,—this bad conscience is from time to time a torment to such persons. For a little while, perhaps, they do not feel it, but then the pain comes on again. It is a keen, harassing, disquieting, hateful pain, which hinders sinners from being happy. They *may* have pleasures, but they cannot be *happy*. They know that God is angry with them; and they know that, at some time or other, HE will visit, HE will judge, HE will punish. They try to get this out of their minds, but the arrow sticks fast there; it keeps its hold. They try to laugh it off, or to be bold and daring, or to be angry and violent. They are loud or unkind in their answers to those, who remind them of it either in set words, or by their examples. But it keeps its hold. And so it is, that all men who are not very abandoned, bad men as well as good, wish that they were holy as God is holy, pure as CHRIST was pure, even though they do not try to be, or pray to God to make them, holy and pure; not that they *like* religion, but that they know, they are convinced in their reason, they feel sure, that religion alone is happiness.

Oh, what a dreadful state, to have our desires one way, and our knowledge and conscience another; to have our life, our breath and food, upon the earth, and our eyes upon HIM who died once and now liveth; to look upon HIM who once was pierced, yet not to rise with HIM and live with HIM; to feel that a holy life is our only happiness, yet to have no heart to pursue it; to be certain that the wages of sin is death, yet to practise sin; to confess that the Angels alone are perfectly happy, for they do God's will perfectly, yet to prepare ourselves for nothing else but the company of devils; to acknowledge that CHRIST is our only hope, yet deliberately to let that hope go! O miserable

state ! miserable they, if any there are who now hear me, who are thus circumstanced !

At first sight, it might seem impossible that any such persons could be found in church. At first sight, one might be tempted to say, "All who come to church, at least, are in earnest, and have given up sin ; they are imperfect indeed, as all Christians are at best, but they do not fall into wilful sin." I should be very glad, my Brethren, to believe this were the case, but I cannot indulge so pleasant a hope. No ; I think it quite certain that some persons at least, I do not say how many, to whom I am speaking, have not made up their minds fully to lead a religious life. They come to church because they think it right, or from other cause. It is very right that they should come ; I am glad they do. This is good, as far as it goes ; but it is not all. They are not so far advanced in the kingdom of God, as to resist the devil, or to flee from him. They cannot command themselves. They act rightly one day, and wrongly the next. They are afraid of being laughed at. They are attracted by bad company. They put off religion to a future day. They think a religious life dull and unpleasant. Yet they have a certain sense of religion ; and they come to church in order to satisfy this sense. Now, I say it is right to come to church ; but, O that they could be persuaded of the simple truth of St. Paul's words, "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly ; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God¹ ;" which may be taken to mean :—He is not a Christian who is one outwardly, who merely comes to church, and professes to desire to be saved by CHRIST. It is very right that he should do so, but it is not enough. He is not a Christian who merely has not cast off religion ; but he is the true Christian, who, while he is a Christian outwardly, is one inwardly also ; who lives to God ; whose secret life is hid with CHRIST in God ; whose heart is religious ; who not only knows and feels that a religious life is true happiness, but loves religion, wishes, tries, prays to be religious, begs GOD ALMIGHTY to give him the will and the power to be religious ; and, as time goes on, grows more and more religious, more fit for heaven.

¹ Rom. ii. 28, 29.

We can do nothing right, unless God gives us the will and the power; we cannot please HIM without the aid of His HOLY SPIRIT. If any one does not deeply feel this as a first truth in religion, he is preparing for himself a dreadful fall. He will attempt, and he will fail signally, utterly. His own miserable experience will make him sure of it, if he will not believe it, as Scripture declares it. But it is not unlikely that some persons, perhaps some who now hear me, may fall into an opposite mistake. They may attempt to excuse their lukewarmness and sinfulness, on the plea that God does not inwardly move them; and they may argue that those holy men whom they so much admire, those saints who are to sit on CHRIST's right and left, are of different nature from themselves, sanctified from their mother's womb, visited, guarded, renewed, strengthened, enlightened in a peculiar way, so as to make it no wonder that they *are* saints, and no fault that they themselves are not. But this is not so; let us not thus miserably deceive ourselves. St. Paul says expressly of himself and the other Apostles, that they were "men of like passions" with the poor ignorant heathen to whom they preached. And does not his history show this? Do you not recollect what he was before his conversion? Did he not rage like a beast of prey against the disciples of CHRIST? and how was he converted? by the vision of our LORD? Yes, in one sense, but not by it alone; hear his own words, "Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not *disobedient* unto the heavenly vision." His obedience was necessary for his conversion; he could not obey without grace; but he would have received grace in vain, had he not obeyed. And, afterwards, was he at once perfect? No; for he says expressly, "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect;" and elsewhere he tells us that he had a "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him;" and he was obliged to "bruise his body and bring it into subjection, lest, after he had preached to others, he should be himself a cast-away." St. Paul conquered, as any one of us must conquer, by "striving," struggling, "to enter in at the strait gate;" he "wrought out his salvation with fear and trembling," as you must do.

This is a point which must be insisted on for the encouragement of the fearful, the confutation of the hypocritical, and the

abasement of the holy. In this world, even the best of men, though they are dead to sin, and have put sin to death, yet have that dead and corrupt thing within them, though they live to God; they have still an enemy of God remaining in their hearts, though they keep it in subjection. This, indeed, is what all men now have in common, a root of evil in them, a principle of sin, or what may become such;—what they differ in is this, not that one man has it, another not; but that one lives in and to it, another not; one subdues it, another not. A holy man is by nature subject to sin equally with others; but he is holy because he subdues, tramples on, chains up, imprisons, puts out of the way this law of sin, and is ruled by religious and spiritual motives. Of CHRIST alone can it be said that HE “did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.” The prince of this world came and found nothing in HIM. HE had no root of sin in His heart; HE was not born in Adam’s sin. Far different are we. HE was thus pure, because HE was the SON of GOD, and born of a Virgin. But we are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity. And since that which is born of the flesh, is flesh, we are sinful and corrupt because we are sinfully begotten of sinners. Even those then who in the end turn out to be saints and attain to life eternal, yet are not born saints, but have with GOD’s regenerating and renewing grace to make themselves saints. It is nothing but the Cross of CHRIST, without us and within us, which changes any one of us from being (as I may say) a devil, into an Angel. We are all by birth children of wrath. We are at best like good olive trees, which have become good by being grafted on a good tree. By nature we are like wild trees, bearing sour and bitter fruit, and so we should remain, were we not grafted upon CHRIST, the good olive tree, made members of CHRIST, the righteous and holy and well-beloved SON of GOD. Hence it is that there is such a change in a saint of GOD from what he was at the first. Consider what a different man St. Paul was after his conversion and before,—raging, as I just now said, like some wild beast, with persecuting fury against the Church, before CHRIST appeared to him, and meekly suffering persecution and glorying in it afterwards. Think of St. Peter denying CHRIST before the resurrection, and confessing, suffering, and dying for HIM afterwards. And so now many an aged saint, who has good hope of heaven,

may recollect things of himself when young, which fill him with dismay. I do not speak as if God's saints led vicious and immoral lives when young; but I mean that their lower and evil nature was not subdued, and perhaps from time to time broke out and betrayed them into acts and words so very different from what is seen in them at present, that did their friends know of them what they themselves know, they would not think them the same persons, and would be quite overpowered with astonishment. We never can guess what a man is by nature, by seeing what self-discipline has made him. Yet if we do become changed and prepared by it for heaven, it is no praise or merit to us. It is God's doing—glory be to HIM, who has wrought so wonderfully with us! Yet in this life, even to the end, there will be enough in us to humble us; even to the end, the holiest men have remains and stains of sin which they would fain get rid of, if they could, and which keep this life from being to them, for all God's grace, a heaven upon earth. No, the Christian life is but a shadow of heaven. Its festal and holy days are but shadows of eternity. But hereafter it will be otherwise. In heaven, sin will be utterly destroyed in every elect soul. We shall have no earthly wishes, no tendencies to disobedience or irreligion, no love of the world or the flesh, to draw us off from supreme devotion to God. We shall have our SAVIOUR'S holiness fulfilled in us, and be able to love God without drawback or infirmity.

That indeed will be a full reward of all our longings here, to praise and serve God eternally with a single and perfect heart in the midst of His Temple. What a time will that be, when all will be perfected in us which at present is but feebly begun! Then we shall see how the Angels worship God. We shall see the calmness, the intenseness, the purity, of their worship. We shall see that awful sight, the Throne of God, and the Seraphim before and around it, crying, "Holy!" We attempt now to imitate in Church what there is performed, as in the beginning, and ever shall be. In the *Te Deum*, day by day we say, "Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD GOD of Sabaoth." In the Creed, we recount God's mercies to us sinners. And we say and sing Psalms and Hymns, to come as near heaven as we can. May these attempts of ours be blest by ALMIGHTY GOD, to prepare us for HIM! may they be, not dead forms, but living services, living with life from

GOD the HOLY GHOST, in those who are dead to sin and who live with CHRIST! I dare say some of you have heard persons, who dissent from the Church, say, (at any rate, they do say,) that our Prayers and Services, and Holy days, are only forms, dead forms, which can do us no good. Yes, they are dead forms to those who are dead, but they are living forms to those who are living. If you come here in a dead way, not in faith, not coming for a blessing, without your hearts in the service, you will get no benefit from it. But if you come in a living way, in faith, and hope, and reverence, and with holy expectant hearts, then all that takes place will be a living service and full of heaven.

Make use, then, of this Holy Easter Season, which lasts forty to fifty days, to become more like HIM who died for you, and who now liveth for evermore. HE promises us, "Because I live, ye shall live also." HE, by dying on the Cross, opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. HE first died, and then HE opened heaven. We, therefore, first commemorate His death, and then, for some weeks in succession, we commemorate and show forth the joys of heaven. They who do not rejoice in the weeks after Easter, would not rejoice in heaven itself. These weeks are a sort of beginning of heaven. Pray God to enable you to rejoice; to enable you to keep the Feast duly. Pray God to make you better Christians. This world is a dream,—you will get no good from it. Perhaps you find this difficult to believe; but be sure so it is. Depend upon it, at the last, you will confess it. Young people expect good from the world, and people of middle age devote themselves to it, and even old people do not like to give it up. But the world is your enemy, and the flesh is your enemy. Come to God, and beg of HIM grace to devote yourselves to HIM. Beg of HIM the will to follow HIM; beg of HIM the power to obey HIM. O how comfortable, pleasant, sweet, soothing, and satisfying is it to lead a holy life,—the life of Angels! It is difficult at first; but with God's grace, all things are possible. O how pleasant to have done with sin! how good and joyful to flee temptation and to resist evil! how meet, and worthy, and fitting, and right, to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness!

SERMON CXLII.

RELIGION PLEASANT TO THE RELIGIOUS.

PSALM xxxiv. 8.

“O taste and see how gracious the LORD is: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.”

YOU see by these words what love ALMIGHTY GOD has towards us, and what claims HE has upon our love. HE is the MOST HIGH, and ALL HOLY. HE inhabiteth eternity: we are but worms compared with HIM. HE would not be less happy though HE had never created us; HE would not be less happy though we were all blotted out again from creation. But HE is the GOD of love: HE brought us all into existence because HE found satisfaction in surrounding HIMSELF with happy creatures: HE made us innocent, holy, upright, and happy. And when Adam fell into sin and his descendants after him, then ever since HE has been imploring us to return to HIM, the Source of all good, by true repentance. “Turn ye, turn ye,” HE says, “why will ye die? As I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” “What could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done to it¹?” And in the text HE condescends to invite us to HIM: “O taste and see how gracious the LORD is: blessed is the man that trusteth in HIM.” As if HE said, “If you would but make trial, one trial; if you would but be persuaded to taste and judge for yourself, so excellent is His graciousness, that you would

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Isaiah v. 4.

never cease to desire, never cease to approach HIM :” according to the saying of the wise man, “ They that eat Me shall yet be hungry, and they that drink Me shall yet be thirsty². ”

This excellencè and desirableness of GOD’S gifts is a subject again and again set before us in Holy Scripture. Thus the Prophet Isaiah speaks of the “ feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees ; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined³. ” And again, under images of another kind : “ HE hath sent Me . . . to give . . . beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called Trees of Righteousness⁴. ” Or again, the Prophet Hosea : “ I will be as the dew unto Israel : he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree ; and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return ; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine : the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon⁵. ” And the Psalmist : “ O that My people would have hearkened unto Me . . the haters of the LORD should have been found liars, but their time should have endured for ever. HE should have fed them also with the finest wheat flour, and with honey out of the stony rock should I have satisfied thee⁶. ” You see all images of what is pleasant and sweet in nature are brought together to describe the pleasantness and sweetness of the gifts which God gives us in grace. As wine enlivens, and bread strengthens, and oil is rich, and honey is sweet, and flowers are odorous, and dew is refreshing, and foliage is beautiful ; so, and much more, are God’s gifts in the Gospel enlivening, and strengthening, and rich, and sweet, and fragrant, and refreshing, and excellent. And as it is natural to feel satisfaction and comfort in these gifts of the visible world, so it is but natural and necessary to be delighted and transported with the gifts of the world invisible ; and as the visible gifts are objects of desire and search, so much more is it, I do not merely say a duty, but a privilege and blessedness to “ taste and see how gracious the LORD is. ”

Other passages in the Psalms speak of this blessedness, besides

² Ecclus. xxiv. 21.

³ Isaiah xxv. 6.

⁴ Isaiah lxi. 1—3.

⁵ Hosea xiv. 5—7.

⁶ Psalm lxxxi. 13—16.

the text. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart," says the Psalmist, "since the time that their corn and wine and oil increased⁷." "The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground, yea, I have a goodly heritage⁸." Again, "The statutes of the LORD are right, and rejoice the heart, . . . more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb⁹." "My heart trusted in HIM, and I am helped; therefore my heart danceth for joy, and in my song will I praise HIM¹." Once more: "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and receivest unto Thee: he shall dwell in thy courts, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple²."

I wish it were possible, my brethren, to lead men to greater holiness and more faithful obedience by setting before them the high and abundant joys which they have who serve God: "In His presence is fulness of joy," "the well of life;" and they are satisfied with "the plenteousness of His house," and "drink of His pleasures as out of a river;" but this is, I know, just what most persons will not believe. They think that it is very right and proper to be religious; they think that it would be better for themselves in the world to come if they were religious now. They do not at all deny either the duty or the expedience of leading a new and holy life; but they cannot understand how it can be pleasant: they cannot believe or admit that it is more pleasant than a life of liberty, laxity, and enjoyment. They, as it were, say, "Keep within bounds, speak within probability, and we will believe you; but do not shock our reason. We will admit that we *ought* to be religious, and that, when we come to die, we shall be very glad to have led religious lives: but to tell us that it is a *pleasant* thing to be religious, this is too much: it is not true; we feel that it is not true; all the world knows and feels it is not true; religion is something unpleasant, gloomy, sad, and troublesome. It imposes a number of restraints on us; it keeps us from doing what we would; it will not let us have our own way; it abridges our liberty; it interferes with our enjoyments; it has fewer, far fewer, joys at present than a worldly life, though

⁷ Psalm iv. 7.⁸ Psalm xvi. 6.⁹ Psalm xix. 10.¹ Psalm xxviii. 7.² Psalm lxxv. 4.

it gains for us more joys hereafter." This is what men say, or would say, if they understood what they feel, and spoke their minds freely.

Alas! I cannot deny that this *is* true in the case of most men. Most men do not like the service of God, though it be perfect freedom; they like to follow their own ways, and they are only religious so far as their conscience obliges them; they are like Balaam, desirous of "the death of the righteous," not of his life. Indeed, this is the very thing I am lamenting and deploring. I lament, my brethren, that so many men, nay, I may say, that so many of you, do *not* like religious service. I do not deny it; but I lament it. I do not deny it: far from it. I know quite well how many there are who do not like coming to Church, and who make excuses for keeping away at times when they might come. I know how many there are who do not come to the Most Holy Sacrament. I know that there are numbers who do not say their prayers in private morning and evening. I know how many there are who are ashamed to be thought religious, who take God's name in vain, and live like the world. Alas! this is the very thing I lament,—that God's service is not pleasant to you. It is not pleasant to those who do not like it: true; but it is pleasant to those who *do*. Observe, this is what I say; not that it is pleasant to those who like it not, but that it is pleasant to those who like it. Nay, what I say is, that it is much *more* pleasant to those who like it, than any thing of this world is pleasant to those who do not like it. This is the point. I do not say that it is pleasant to most men; but I say that it is in itself the most pleasant thing in the world. Nothing is so pleasant as God's service to those *to whom* it is pleasant. The pleasures of sin are not to be compared in fulness and intensity to the pleasures of holy living. The pleasures of holiness are far more pleasant to the holy, than the pleasures of sin to the sinner. O that I could get you to believe this! O that you had a heart to feel it and know it! O that you had a heart to taste God's pleasures and to make proof of them; to taste and see how gracious the Lord is!

None can know, however, the joys of being holy and pure but the holy. If an Angel were to come down from heaven, even he could not explain them to you; nor could he in turn understand

what the pleasures of sin are. Do you think that an Angel could be made to understand what are the pleasures of sin? I trow not. You might as well attempt to persuade him that there was pleasure in feasting on dust and ashes. There are brute animals who wallow in the mire and eat corruption. This seems strange to us: much stranger to an Angel is it how any one can take pleasure in any thing so filthy, so odious, so loathsome as sin. Many men, as I have been saying, wonder what possible pleasure there can be in any thing so melancholy as religion. Well: be sure of this,—it is *more* wonderful to an Angel, what possible pleasure there can be in sinning. It is *more* wonderful, I say. He would turn away with horror and disgust, both because sin is so base a thing in itself, and because it is so hateful in God's sight.

Let no persons then be surprised that religious obedience should really be so pleasant in itself, when it seems to them so distasteful. Let them not be surprised that *what* the pleasure is cannot be explained to *them*. It is a secret till they try to be religious. Men know what sin is, by experience. They do not know what holiness is; and they cannot obtain the knowledge of its secret pleasure, till they join themselves truly and heartily to CHRIST, and devote themselves to His service,—till they “taste,” and thereby try. This pleasure is as hidden from them, as the pleasures of sin are hidden from the Angels. The Angels have never eaten the forbidden fruit, and their eyes are not open to know good and evil. And we *have* eaten the forbidden fruit,—at least Adam did, and we are his descendants,—and our eyes *are* open to know evil. And, alas! on the other hand, they have become blinded to good; they require opening to see, to know, to understand good. And till our eyes *are* opened spiritually, we *shall* ever think religion distasteful and unpleasant, and shall wonder how any one can like it. Such is our miserable state,—we are blind to the highest and truest glories, and dead to the most lively and wonderful of all pleasures;—and no one can describe them to us. None other than GOD the HOLY SPIRIT can help us in this matter, by enlightening and changing our hearts. So it is; and yet I will say one thing, by way of suggesting to you how great and piercing the joys of religion are. Think of this. Is there any one who does not know how very painful the

feeling of a bad conscience is? Do not you recollect, my Brethren, some time or other, having done something you knew to be wrong? and do you not remember afterwards what a piercing bitter feeling came on you? Is not the feeling of a bad conscience different from any other feeling, and more distressing than any other, till we have accustomed ourselves to it? Persons do accustom themselves and lose this feeling; but till we blunt our conscience, it is very painful. And why? It is the feeling of God's displeasure, and therefore it is so painful. Consider then: if God's displeasure is so distressing to us, must not God's approval and favour be just the reverse; like life from the dead, most exceedingly joyful and transporting? And this is what it is to be holy and religious. It is to have God's favour. And, as it is a great misery to be under God's wrath, so it is a great and wonderful joy to be in God's favour; and those who know what a misery the former is, may fancy, though they do not know, how high a blessing the latter is. From what you know, then, judge of what you do not know. From the miseries of guilt, which, alas! you have experienced, conjecture the blessedness of holiness and purity which you have not experienced. From the pain of a bad conscience, believe in the unspeakable joy and gladness of a good conscience.

I have been addressing those who do not know what religious peace and divine pleasures are; but there are those present, I hope, who in a measure are not strangers to them. I know that none of us gain all the pleasure from God's service which it might afford us; still some of us, I hope, gain some pleasure. I hope there are some of those who hear me, who take a pleasure in coming to Church, in saying their prayers, in thinking of God, in singing Psalms, in blessing HIM for the mercies of the Gospel, and in celebrating CHRIST's death and resurrection, as at this season of the year³. These persons have "tasted" and tried. I trust they find the taste so heavenly, that *they* will not need any proof that religion is a pleasant thing; nay, more pleasant than anything else, worth the following above all other things, and unpleasant only to those who are not religious.

Let such persons then think of this, that if a religious life is

³ Easter.

pleasant here, in spite of the old Adam interrupting the pleasure and defiling them, what a glorious day it will be, if we are blessed hereafter with an entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven! None of us, even the holiest, can guess *how* happy we shall be; for St. John says, "We know not what we shall be⁴;" and St. Paul, "Now we see in a glass darkly, but then face to face." Yet in proportion to our present holiness and virtue, we have some faint ideas of what will then be. And in Scripture various descriptions of heaven are given us, in order to arrest, encourage, and humble us. We are told that the Angels of God are very bright, and clad in white robes. The Saints and Martyrs too are clad in white robes, with palms in their hands; and they sing praises unto HIM that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the LAMB. When our LORD was transfigured, HE showed us what Heaven is. His raiment became white as snow, white and glistening. Again, at one time HE appeared to St. John, and then, "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength⁵." And what CHRIST is, such do His Saints become hereafter. Here below they are clad in a garment of sinful flesh; but when the end comes, and they rise from the grave, they shall inherit glory, and shall be ever young and ever shining. In that day, all men will see and be convinced, even bad men, that God's servants are really happy, and only they. In that day, even lost souls, though they will not be able to understand the blessedness of religion, will have no doubt at all of what they now doubt, or pretend to doubt, that religion is blessed. They laugh at religion, think strictness to be narrowness of mind, and regularity to be dulness; and give bad names to religious men. They will not be able to do so then. They think themselves the great men of the earth now, and look down upon the religious; but then, who would not have been a religious man, to have so great a reward? who will then have any heart to speak against religion, even though he has not "a heart to fear God and keep all His commandments always?" In that day, they will look upon the right-

⁴ 1 John iii. 2.⁵ Rev. i. 14—16.

eous man, and "be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for. And they, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he, whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour; how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints⁶!"

Think of all this, my Brethren, and rouse yourselves, and run forward with a good courage on your way towards heaven. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Strive to get holier and holier every day, that you may be worthy to stand before the SON of MAN. Pray GOD to teach you His will, and to lead you forth in the right way, because of your enemies. Submit yourselves to His guidance, and you will have comfort given you, according to your day, and peace at the last.

⁶ Wisdom v. 2—5.

SERMON CXLIH.

INWARD PRAYER.

1 THESS. v. 17.

“Pray without ceasing.”

THERE are two modes of praying mentioned in Scripture ; the one is prayer at set times and places, and in set forms ; the other is what the text speaks of,—continual or habitual prayer. The former of these is what is commonly called prayer, whether it be public or private. The other kind of praying may also be called holding communion with GOD, or living in GOD's sight, and this may be done all through the day, wherever we are, and is commanded us as the duty, or rather the characteristic, of those who are really servants and friends of JESUS CHRIST.

These two kinds of praying are also natural duties. I mean, we should in a way be bound to attend to them, even if we were born in a heathen country and had never heard of the Bible. For our conscience and reason would lead us to practise them, if we did but attend to these divinely-given informants. I shall here confine myself to the consideration of the latter of the two, habitual or inward prayer, which is enjoined in the text, with the view of showing what it is, and how we are to practise it ; and I shall speak of it, first, as a natural duty, and then as the characteristic of a Christian.

1. At first sight, it may be difficult to some persons to understand what is meant by praying always. Now consider it as a

natural duty, that is, a duty taught us by natural reason and religious feeling, and you will soon see what it consists in.

What does nature teach us about ourselves, even before opening the Bible?—that we are creatures of the Great God, the Maker of heaven and earth; and that, as His creatures, we are bound to serve HIM and give HIM our hearts; in a word, to be religious beings. And next, what is religion but a habit? and what is a habit but a state of mind which is always upon us, as a sort of ordinary dress or inseparable garment of the soul? A man cannot really be religious one hour, and not religious the next. We might as well say he could be in a state of good health one hour, and in bad health the next. A man who is religious, is religious morning, noon, and night; his religion is a certain character, a mould in which his thoughts, words, and actions are cast, all forming parts of one and the same whole. He sees God in all things; every course of action he directs towards those objects which God has placed before his heart; every occurrence of the day, every event, every person met with, all news which he hears, he measures by the standard of God's will. And a person who does this may be said almost literally to pray without ceasing; for, knowing himself to be in God's presence, he is continually led to address HIM reverently, whom he sets always before him, in the inward language of prayer and praise, of humble confession and joyful trust.

All this, I say, any thoughtful man acknowledges from mere natural reason. To be religious is, in other words, to have the habit of prayer, or to pray always. This is what Scripture means by doing all things to God's glory; that is, so placing God's presence and will before us, and so consistently acting with a reference to HIM, that all we do becomes one body and course of obedience, witnessing without ceasing to HIM who made us, and whose servants we are; and in its separate parts promoting more or less directly His glory, according as each particular thing we happen to be doing admits more or less of a religious character. Thus religious obedience is, as it were, a spirit dwelling in us, extending its influence to every motion of the soul; and just as healthy men and strong men show their health and strength in all they do, (not indeed equally in all things, but in some things more than in others, because all actions do not require or betoken

the presence of their health or strength, and yet even in their step, and their voice, and their gestures, and their countenance, showing in due measure their vigour of body,) so they who have the true health and strength of the soul, a clear, sober, and deep faith in HIM in whom they have their being, will in all they do, nay (as St. Paul says), even whether they “eat or drink¹,” be living in God’s sight, or, in the words of the same Apostle in the text, in ceaseless prayer.

If it be said that no man on earth does thus continually and perfectly glorify and worship God, this we all know too well; this is only saying that none of us has reached perfection. We know, alas! that in many things all of us offend. But I am speaking not of what we *do*, but of what we *ought to do*, and must aim at doing,—of *our duty*; and, for the sake of impressing our duty on our hearts, it is of use to draw the picture of a man perfectly obedient, as a pattern for us to aim at. In proportion as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our SAVIOUR, so shall we approximate to HIM in obedience, who is our great example, and who alone of all the sons of Adam lived in the perfection of unceasing prayer.

Thus the meaning and reasonableness of the command in the text is shown by considering it as a natural duty, religion being no accident which comes and goes by fits and starts, but a certain spirit or life.

2. Now, secondly, I will state all this in the language of Scripture; that is, I will confirm this view of our duty, which natural reason might suggest, by that other and far clearer voice of God, His inspired word.

How is religious obedience described in Scripture? Surely as a certain kind of life. We know what life of the body is; it is a state of the body: the pulse beats; all things are in motion. The hidden principle of life, though we know not how or what it is, is seen in these outward signs of it. And so of the life of the soul. The soul, indeed, was not possessed of this life of God when first born into the world. We are born with dead souls; that is, dead as regards religious obedience. If left to ourselves we should grow up haters of God, and tend nearer and nearer,

¹ 1 Cor. x. 31.

the longer we had existence, to utter spiritual death, that inward fire of hell torments, maturing in evil through a long eternity. Such is the course we are beginning to run when born into the world; and were it not for the gospel promise, what a miserable event would the birth of children be! Who could take pleasure at the sight of such poor beings, unconscious as yet of their wretchedness, but containing in their hearts that fearful root of sin which is sure in the event of reigning and triumphing unto everlasting woe? But God has given us all, even the little children, a good promise through CHRIST; and our prospects are changed. And HE has given not only a promise of future happiness, but through His HOLY SPIRIT HE implants here and at once a new principle within us, a new spiritual life, a life of the soul, as it is called. St. Paul tells us, that "God hath quickened us," made us *live*, "together with CHRIST, . . . and hath raised us up together" from the death of sin, "and made us sit together in heavenly places in CHRIST JESUS²." Now how God quickens our souls we do not know; as little as how HE quickens our bodies. Our spiritual "life" (as St. Paul says) "is *hid* with CHRIST in God³." But as our bodily life discovers itself by its activity, so is the presence of the HOLY SPIRIT in us discovered by a spiritual activity; and this activity is the spirit of continual prayer. Prayer is to spiritual life what the beating of the pulse and the drawing of the breath are to the life of the body. It would be as absurd to suppose that life could last when the body was cold and motionless and senseless, as to call a soul alive which does not pray. The state or habit of spiritual life exerts itself, consists, in the continual activity of prayer.

Do you ask, where does Scripture say this? Where? In all it tells us of the connexion between the new birth and faith; for what is prayer but the expression, the voice of faith? For instance, St. Paul says to the Galatians, "The *life* which I now live in the flesh" (*i. e.* the new and spiritual life), "I live by the *faith* of the Son of God, who loved me⁴." For what, I say, is faith, but the looking to God and thinking of HIM continually, holding habitual fellowship with HIM, that is, speaking to HIM in our hearts all through the day, praying without ceasing? After-

² Eph. ii. 5, 6.

³ Col. iii. 3.

⁴ Gal. ii. 20.

wards, in the same Epistle, he tells us first that nothing avails but faith working by love ; but soon after, he calls this same availing principle a new creature : so that the new birth and a living faith are inseparable. Never, indeed, must it be supposed, as we are indolently apt to suppose, that the gift of grace which we receive at baptism is a mere outward privilege, a mere outward pardon, in which the heart is not concerned ; or as if it were some mere mark put on the soul, distinguishing it indeed from souls unregenerate, as if by a colour or seal, but not connected with the thoughts, mind, and heart of a Christian. This would be a gross and false view of the nature of God's mercy given us in CHRIST. For the new birth of the HOLY SPIRIT sets the soul in motion in a heavenly way : it gives us good thoughts and desires, enlightens and purifies us, and prompts us to seek God. In a word (as I have said), it gives a spiritual *life* ; it opens the eyes of our mind, so that we begin to see God in all things by faith, and hold continual intercourse with HIM by prayer ; and if we cherish these gracious influences, we shall become holier and wiser and more heavenly, year by year, our hearts being ever a change from darkness to light, from the ways and works of Satan to the perfection of divine obedience.

These considerations may serve to impress upon our minds the meaning of the precept in the text, and others like it which are found in St. Paul's Epistles. For instance, he enjoins the Ephesians to "pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." To the Philippians he says, "Be careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God⁵." To the Colossians, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." To the Romans, "Continue instant in prayer⁶."

Thus the true Christian pierces through the veil of this world and sees the next. He holds intercourse with it ; he addresses God, as a child might address his parent, with as clear a view of HIM, and with as unmixed a confidence in HIM ; with deep reverence indeed, and godly fear and awe, but still with certainty and exactness : as St. Paul says, "I know whom I have be-

⁵ Eph. vi. 18. Phil. iv. 6.

⁶ Col. iv. 2. Rom. xii. 12.

lieved',” with the prospect of judgment to come to sober him, and the assurance of present grace to cheer him.

If what I have said is true, surely it is well worth thinking about. Most men indeed, I fear, neither pray at fixed times, nor do they cultivate an habitual communion with **ALMIGHTY** GOD. Indeed, it is too plain how most men pray. They pray now and then, when they feel particular need of God’s assistance; when they are in trouble or in apprehension of danger; or when their feelings are unusually excited. They do not know what it is either to be habitually religious, or to devote a certain number of minutes at fixed times to the thought of God. Nay, the very best Christian, how lamentably deficient is he in the spirit of prayer! Let any man compare in his mind how many times he has prayed when in trouble, with how seldom he has returned thanks when his prayers have been granted; or the earnestness with which he prays against expected sufferings, with the languor and unconcern of his thanksgivings afterwards, and he will soon see how little he has of the real habit of prayer, and how much his religion depends on accidental excitement, which is no test of a religious heart. Or supposing he has to repeat the same prayer for a month or two, the cause of using it continuing, let him compare the earnestness with which he first said it, and tried to enter into it, with the coldness with which he at length uses it. Why is this, except that his perception of the unseen world is not the true view which faith gives (else it would last as that world itself lasts), but a mere dream, which endureth for a night, and is succeeded by a hard worldly joy in the morning? Is God habitually in our thoughts? Do we think of **HIM**, and of His Son our **SAVIOUR**, through the day? When we eat and drink, do we thank **HIM**, not as a mere matter of form, but in spirit? When we do things in themselves right, do we lift up our minds to **HIM**, and desire to promote His glory? When we are in the exercise of our callings, do we still think of **HIM**, acting ever conscientiously, desiring to know His will more exactly than we do at present, and aiming at fulfilling it more completely and abundantly? Do we wait on His grace to enlighten, renew, strengthen us?

I do not ask whether we use many words about religion. There is no need to do this : nay, we should avoid a boastful display of our better feelings and practices, silently serving God without human praise, and hiding our conscientiousness except when it would dishonour God to do so. There are times, indeed, when in the presence of a holy man to confess is a benefit, and there are times when in the presence of worldly men to confess becomes a duty ; but these seasons, whether of privilege or duty, are comparatively rare. But we are always with ourselves and our God ; and that silent inward confession in His presence may be sustained and continual, and will end in durable fruit.

But if those persons come short of their duty who make religion a matter of impulse and mere feeling, what shall be said to those who have no feeling or thought of religion at all ? What shall be said of the multitude of young people who ridicule seriousness, and deliberately give themselves up to vain thoughts ? Alas ! my brethren, you do not even observe or recognize the foolish empty thoughts which pass through your minds ; you are not distressed even for those you recollect ; but what will you say at the last day, when, instead of those true and holy visions in which consists divine communion, you find recorded against you in God's book an innumerable multitude of the idlest, silliest imaginings, nay, of the wickedest, which ever disgraced an immortal being ? What will you say, when heaven and hell are before you, and the books are opened, and therein you find the sum total of your youthful desires and dreams, your passionate wishes for things of this world, your low-minded, grovelling tastes, your secret contempt and aversion for serious subjects and persons, your efforts to attract the looks of sinners and to please those who displease God ; your hankerings after worldly gaieties and luxuries, your admiration of the rich or titled, your indulgence of impure thoughts, your self-conceit and pitiful vanity ? Ah, I may seem to you to use harsh words ; but be sure I do not use terms near so severe as you will use against yourselves in that day. Then those men, whom you now think gloomy and over-strict, will seem to you truly wise ; and the advice to pray without ceasing, which once you laughed at as fit only for the dull, the formal, the sour, the poor-spirited, or the aged, will be approved by your own experience, as it is even now by your rea-

son and conscience. Oh, that you could be brought to give one serious hour to religion, in anticipation of that long eternity where you *must* be serious! True, you may laugh now, but there is no vain merriment on the other side of the grave. The devils, though they repent not, tremble. *You* will be among those unwilling serious ones then, if you are mad enough to be gay and careless now; if you are mad enough to laugh, jest, and scoff your poor moment now on earth, which is short enough to prepare for eternity, without your making it shorter by wasting your youth in sin. Could you but see who it is that suggests to you all your lighter thoughts, which you put instead of divine communion, the shock would make you serious, even if it did not make you religious. Could you see, what God sees, those snares and pitfalls which the devil is placing about your path; could you see that all your idle thoughts which you cherish, which seem so bright and pleasant, so much pleasanter than religious thoughts, are inspired by that Ancient Seducer of Mankind, the Author of Evil, who stands at your side while you deride religion, serious indeed himself while he makes you laugh, not able to laugh at his own jests, while he carries you dancing forward to perdition,—doubtless you would tremble, even as he does while he tempts you. But this you cannot possibly see, you cannot break your delusion, except by first taking God's word in this matter on trust. You cannot see the unseen world at once. They who ever speak with God in their hearts, are in turn taught by Him in all knowledge; but they who refuse to act upon the light which God gave them by nature, at length come to lose it altogether, and are given up to a reprobate mind.

May God save us all from such wilful sin, old as well as young, and enlighten us one and all in His saving knowledge, and give us the will and the power to serve Him!

SERMON CXLIV.

INFANT BAPTISM.

JOHN iii. 5.

“Except a man be born of water and of the SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”

NONE can be saved, unless the blood of CHRIST, the Immaculate LAMB of GOD, be imputed to him; and it is His gracious will that it should be imputed to us, one by one, by means of outward and visible signs, or what are called Sacraments. These visible rites represent to us the heavenly truth, and convey what they represent. The baptismal washing betokens the cleansing of the soul from sin; the elements of bread and wine are figures of what is present but not seen, “the body and blood of CHRIST, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the LORD’s Supper.” So far the two sacraments agree; yet there is this important difference in their use,—that Baptism is but *once* administered, but the LORD’s Supper is to be received *continually*. Our LORD CHRIST told the Apostles to baptize *at the time* they made men His disciples. Baptism *admitted* them to His favour once for all; but the LORD’s Supper *keeps* us and secures us in His favour day by day. HE said, “This do, *as often as* ye drink it, in *remembrance* of ME.”

Here, then, a question at once arises, which it is important to consider:—*At what time* in our life are we to be baptized, or made disciples of CHRIST? The first Christians of course were baptized when they were come to a full age, because then the Gospel

was for the first time preached to them ; they had no means of being baptized when young. But the case is different with those who are born of Christian parents ; so the question now is, at what age are the sons of Christians to be baptized ?

Now, for fifteen hundred years there was no dispute or difficulty in answering this question all over the Christian world ; none who acknowledged the duty of baptizing at all, but administered the rite to infants, as we do at present. But about three hundred years ago strange opinions were set afloat, and sects arose, doing every thing which had not been done before, and undoing every thing that had been done before, and all this (as they professed) on the principle that it was every one's duty to judge and act for himself ; and among these new sects there was one which maintained that Infant Baptism was a mistake, and that, mainly upon this short argument,—that it was no where commanded in Scripture.

Let us, then, consider this subject : and first, it is but fair and right to acknowledge at once that Scripture does *not* bid us baptize children. This, however, is no very serious admission ; for Scripture does not name *any* time at all for Baptism ; yet it orders us to be baptized at some age or other. It is plain, then, whatever age we fix upon, we shall be going beyond the letter of Scripture. This may or may not be a difficulty, but it cannot be avoided : it is not a difficulty of *our* making. God has so willed it. He has kept silence, and doubtless with good reason ; and surely we must try to do our part and to find out what He would have us do, according to the light, be it greater or less, which He has vouchsafed to us.

Is it any new thing that it should take time and thought to find out accurately what our duty is ? Is it a new thing that the full and perfect truth should not lie on the very surface of things, in the bare letter of Scripture ? Far from it. Those who *strive* to enter into life, these alone find the strait gate which leads thereto. It is no proof even that it is a matter of indifference what age is proper for Baptism, that Scripture is not clear about it, but hides its real meaning ; not commanding but hinting what we should do. For consider how many things in this life are difficult to attain, yet, far from being matters of indifference, are necessary for our comfort or even well-being. Nay, it often

happens that the more valuable any gift is, the more difficult it is to gain it. Take, for instance, the art of medicine. Is there an art more important for our life and comfort? Yet how difficult and uncertain is the science of it! what time it takes to be well versed and practised in it! What would be thought of a person who considered that it mattered little whether a sick man took this course or that, on the ground that men were not physicians by nature, and that if the CREATOR had meant medicine to be for our good, HE would have told us at once, and every one of us, the science and the practice of it? In the same way it does not at all follow, even if it *were* difficult to find out at what age Baptism should be administered, that therefore one time is as good as another. Difficulty is the very attendant upon great blessings, not on things indifferent.

But a man may say that Scripture is given us for the very purpose of making the knowledge of our duty easy to us;—what is meant by a revelation, if it does not reveal?—and that we have no revelation to tell us what medicines are good or bad for the body, but that a revelation *has* been made in order to tell us what is good or bad for the soul:—if, then, a thing *were* important for our soul's benefit, Scripture would have plainly declared it. I answer, who told us all this? Doubtless, Scripture *was* given to make our duty *easier than before*; but how do we know that it was intended to take away *all* difficulty of every kind? So says not CHRIST, when HE bids us seek and strive and so find; to knock, to watch, and to pray. No; Scripture has not undertaken to *tell* us every thing, but merely to give us the means of *finding* every thing: and thus much we can conclude on the subject before us, that if it is important, there are *means* of determining it; but we cannot infer, either that it must actually be *commanded* in the letter of Scripture, or that it can be found out by every individual *for and by himself*.

But it may be said, Scripture says that the times of the Gospel shall be times of great light: "All thy children shall be taught of the LORD, and great shall be the peace of thy children¹." This is true: but whose children? The Church's. Surely it is quite true, if we come to the Church for information; for she has

¹ Isaiah liv. 13.

ever spoken most clearly on the subject. She has ever baptized infants and enjoined the practice; she has ever answered to the prophecy as being "a word behind us, saying, This is the way; walk ye in it." Her teachers surely (according to the prophecy) have never been removed into a corner. But if we will not accept this supernatural mercy, then I say it is not unnatural that we should find ourselves in the same kind of doubt in which we commonly are involved in matters of this world. God has promised us light and knowledge in the Gospel, but in His way, not in *our* way.

But after all, in the present instance, surely there is no great difficulty in finding out what God would have us to do, though HE has not told us in Scripture in the plainest way. I say it is not difficult to see, as the Church has ever been led to see, that God would have us baptize young children, and that to delay Baptism is to delay a great benefit, and is hazarding a child's salvation. There is no difficulty, if men are not resolved to make one.

1. Let us consider, first, what is Baptism? It is a means and pledge of God's mercy, pardon, acceptance of us for CHRIST's sake; it gives us grace to change our natures. Now, surely infants, as being born in sin, have most abundant *need* of God's mercy and grace: this cannot be doubted. Even at first sight, then, it appears *desirable* (to say the least) that they should be baptized. Baptism is just suited to their need: it contains a promise of the very blessings which they want, and which without God's free bounty they cannot have. If, indeed, Baptism were merely or principally *our* act, then perhaps the case would be altered. But it is not an act of ours so much as of God's; a pledge from HIM. And, I repeat, infants, as being by nature under God's wrath, having no elements of spiritual life in them, being corrupt and sinful, are surely, in a singular manner, objects of Baptism as far as the question of desirableness is concerned.

Let us refer to our SAVIOUR's words to Nicodemus in the text. Our LORD tells him none can enter into the kingdom of God who is not born of water and the Spirit? And why? *Because* (HE goes on to say) "that which is born of the flesh is flesh²." We

² John iii. 6.

need a new birth, because our first birth is a birth unto sin. Who does not see that this reason is equally cogent for *infant* Baptism as for Baptism at all? Baptism by water and the Spirit is necessary for salvation (HE says), *because* man's *nature* is corrupt; therefore infants must need this regeneration too. If, indeed, sin were not planted deep in man's very heart,—if it were merely an accidental evil into which some fell while others escaped it,—nay, even if, though (as a fact) all men actually fall into sin, yet this general depravity arose merely from bad example, not from natural bias, then indeed Baptism of water and the Spirit would not be necessary except for those who, having come to years of understanding, had actual sin to answer for: but if, as our SAVIOUR implies, even a child's heart, before he begins to think and act, is under divine wrath, and contains the sure and miserable promise of future sin as the child grows up, can we do otherwise than thankfully accept the pledge and means which HE has given us of a new birth unto holiness; and since, by not telling us the time for Baptism, HE has in a way left it to ourselves to decide upon it, shall we not apply the medicine given us when we are sure of the disease? “Can any man *forbid* water,” to use St. Peter's words under different circumstances, “that” children “should not be baptized?” The burden of proof, as it is called, is with those who withhold the sacrament.

Will it be said infants are not properly *qualified* for Baptism? How is this an objection? Consider the text.—“Except one be born of water and the SPIRIT,” says our LORD, “he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD.” There is nothing said about qualifications or conditions here which might exclude infants from Baptism,—nothing about the necessity of previous faith, or previous good works, in order to fit us for the mercy of GOD. Nor indeed could any thing be said. CHRIST knew that, without His grace, man's nature could not bear any good fruit, and not bring any good gift. Far from it. Any such notion of man's unassisted strength is wholly detestable, contrary to the very first principles of all true religion, whether Jewish, Christian, or even Pagan. We are miserably fallen creatures, we are by nature corrupt,—we dare not talk even of children being naturally pleasing in GOD's sight. And if we wait till children are in a condition to bring

something to God, in payment (so to say) of His mercy to them, till they have faith and repentance, they never will be baptized; for they will never attain to that condition. To defer Baptism till persons actually have repentance and faith, is refusing to give medicine till a patient begins to get well. It would be hard indeed, if Satan be allowed to have access to the soul from infancy, as soon as it begins to think, and we refuse to do what we can, or what promises well, towards gaining for it the protection of God against the Tempter.

On this first view of the case then, from the original corruption of our nature, from the need which all men are under from their birth of pardon and help from God, from Baptism being a promise of mercy just suited to our need, and from the impossibility of any one (let him be allowed to live unbaptized ever so long) bringing any self-provided recommendation of himself to God's favour; on all these accounts, I say, since God has given us no particular directions in the matter, but has left it to ourselves, it seems, on the first view of the case, most fitting and right to give children the privilege of Baptism.

2. But, in fact, we are not, strictly speaking, left without positive encouragement to bring infants near to Him. We are not merely left to infer generally the propriety of Infant Baptism; CHRIST has shown us His *willingness* to receive children. Some men have said (indeed most of us perhaps in seasons of unbelief have been tempted in our hearts to ask), "What good can Baptism do senseless children? you might as well baptize things without life; they sleep or even struggle during the ceremony, and interrupt it; it is a mere superstition." This, my brethren, is the language of the world, whoever uses it. It is putting sight against faith. If we are assured Baptism has been blessed by CHRIST, as the rite of admittance into His Church, we have nothing to do with those outward appearances which, though they might prove something perhaps, had HE not spoken, now HE has spoken lose all force. To such objections, I would reply, by citing our SAVIOUR'S "own word and deed." We find that infants *were* brought to CHRIST; and His disciples seem to have doubted in the same spirit of unbelief what *could* be the good of bringing helpless and senseless children to the SAVIOUR of men.

They doubtless thought that His time would be better employed in teaching *them*, than in attending to children; that it was interfering with His usefulness. “But when JESUS saw it, HE was much displeased³.” These are remarkable words: “much displeased,”—that is, HE was uneasy, indignant, angry (as the Greek word may be more literally translated); and we are told “HE took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and *blessed them*.” CHRIST, then, *can* bless infants, in spite of their being to all appearance as yet incapable of thought or feeling. HE can, and did, bless them; and, in the very sense in which they then were blessed, we believe they are capable of a blessing in Baptism.

3. And we may add this consideration. It is certain that children ought to be instructed in religious truth, as they can bear it, from the very first dawn of reason; clearly, they are not to be left without a Christian training till they arrive at years of maturity. Now, let it be observed, CHRIST seems distinctly to connect teaching with Baptism, as if He intended to convey through it a blessing upon teaching,—“Go ye and teach all the nations, baptizing them.” If children, then, are to be considered as under teaching, as learners in the school of CHRIST, surely they should be admitted into that school by Baptism.

These are the reasons for Infant Baptism which strike the mind, even on the first consideration of the subject; and in the absence of express information from Scripture, they are (as far as they go) satisfactory. At *what age* should we be baptized? I answer, in childhood; because all children *require* divine pardon and grace (as our SAVIOUR HIMSELF implies), all are *capable* of His blessing (as His action shows), all are *invited* to His blessing, and Baptism is a pledge from HIM of His favour, as His Apostles frequently declare. Since infants are to be brought to CHRIST, we must have invented a rite, if Baptism did not answer the purpose of a dedication. Again, I say, in childhood; because all children need Christian instruction, and Baptism is a badge and mark of a scholar in CHRIST’S school. And moreover, I will add, because St. Paul speaks of the children of Christian parents as being “holy,” in a favoured state, a state of unmerited

³ Mark x. 14.

blessing ; and because he seems to have baptized at once whole families, where the head of the family was converted to the faith of the Gospel⁴.

To conclude. Let me beg of all who hear me, and who wish to serve God, to remember, in their ordinary prayers, their habitual thoughts, the daily business of life, that they were once baptized. If Baptism be merely a ceremony, to be observed indeed, but then at once forgotten,—a decent form, which it would neither be creditable nor for temporal reasons expedient to neglect,—it is most surely no subject for a Christian minister to speak of ; CHRIST's religion has no fellowship with bare forms, and no where encourages mere outward observances. If, indeed, there be any who degrade Baptism into a mere ceremony, which has in it no spiritual promise, let such men look to it for themselves, and defend their practice of baptizing infants as they can. But for me, my brethren, I would put it before you as a true and plain pledge, without reserve, of God's grace given to the souls of those who receive it ; not a mere form, but a real means and instrument of blessing verily and indeed received ; and, as being such, I warn you to remember what a talent has been committed to you. There are very many persons who do not think of Baptism in this religious point of view ; who are in no sense in the habit of blessing God for it, and praying HIM for His further grace to profit by the privileges given them in it ; who, when even they pray for grace, do not ground their hope of being heard and answered, on the promise of blessing in Baptism made to them ; above all, who do not fear to sin after Baptism. This is of course an omission ; in many cases it is a *sin*. Let us set ourselves right in this respect. Nothing will remind us more forcibly both of our advantages and our duties ; for from the very nature of our minds outward signs are especially calculated (if rightly used) to strike, to affect, to subdue, to change them.

Blessed is he who makes the most of the privileges given him, who takes them for a light to his feet and a lanthorn to his path. We have had the Sign of the Cross set on us in infancy,—shall we ever forget it ? It is our profession. We had the water poured on us,—it was like the blood on the door-posts, when

⁴ 1 Cor. vii. 14. Acts xvi. 15. 33.

the destroying Angel passed over. Let us fear to sin after grace given, lest a worse thing come upon us. Let us aim at learning these two great truths :—that we can do nothing good without God's grace, yet that we can sin against that grace ; and thus that it may be made the cause, on the one hand, of our gaining eternal life, and, on the other, eternal misery.

SERMON CXLV.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

MATT. xvi. 18.

“ And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Too many persons at this day,—in spite of what they see before them, in spite of what they read in history,—too many persons forget, or deny, or do not know, that CHRIST has set up a Kingdom in the world. In spite of the prophecies, in spite of the Gospels and Epistles, in spite of their eyes and their ears,—whether it be their sin or their misfortune, so it is,—they do not obey HIM in that way in which it is His will that HE should be obeyed. They do not obey HIM in His Kingdom ; they think to be His people, without being His subjects. They determine to serve HIM in their own way ; and though HE has formed His chosen into one body, they think to separate from the body, yet to remain in the number of the chosen.

Far different is the doctrine suggested to us by the text. In St. Peter, who is there made the rock on which the Church is founded, we see, as in a type, its unity, stability, and permanence. It is set up in one name, not in many, to show that it is one ; and that name is Peter, to show that it will last, or, as the Divine Speaker proceeds, that “ the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” In like manner, St. Paul calls it, “ the pillar and ground of the truth¹.”

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

This is a subject especially brought before us at this time of year², and it may be well now to enlarge upon it.

Now that all Christians are, in some sense or other, one, in our LORD's eyes, is plain, from various parts of the New Testament. In His mediatorial prayer for them to the ALMIGHTY FATHER, before His passion, HE expressed His purpose that they should be *one*. St. Paul, in like manner, writing to the Corinthians, says, "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, *so also* is CHRIST. . . . Now ye are *the Body* of CHRIST, and members in particular." To the Ephesians, he says, "There is *one Body*, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling : one LORD, one faith, one baptism, one GOD and FATHER of all³."

And, further, it is to this one Body, regarded as one, that the special privileges of the Gospel are given. It is not that this man receives the blessing, and that man, but one and all, the whole body, as one man, one new spiritual man, with one accord, seeks and gains it. The Holy Church throughout the world, "the Bride, the LAMB's wife," is one, not many, and the elect souls are all elected in her, not in isolation. For instance : "HE is our peace who hath made both [Jews and Gentiles] one, . . . to make in HIMSELF of twain *one new man*." In the same Epistle, it is said, that all nations are "*fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and fellow-partakers* of His promise in CHRIST;" and that we must "one and all come," or converge, "in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the SON of GOD, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST;" that as "the husband is the head of the wife," *so* "CHRIST is the Head of the Church," having "loved it and given HIMSELF for it, that HE might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word⁴." These are a few out of many passages, which connect Gospel privileges with the circumstance or condition of unity in those who receive them; the image of CHRIST and token of their acceptance being stamped upon them *then*, at

² Easter and Whitsuntide.

³ John xvii. 23. 1 Cor. xii. 12. Eph. iv. 4—6.

⁴ Eph. ii. 14; iii. 6; iv. 13; v. 23—26.

that moment, when they are considered as *one*; so that henceforth the whole multitude, no longer viewed as mere individual men, become portions or members of the indivisible Body of CHRIST Mystical, so knit together in HIM by Divine Grace, that all have what HE has, and each has what all have.

The same great truth is taught us in such texts as speak of all Christians forming one spiritual building, of which the Jewish Temple was the type. They are temples one by one, as being portions of that one Temple which is the Church. "Ye are *built up*," says St. Peter, "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by JESUS CHRIST." Hence the word "edification," which properly means this building up of all Christians in one, has come to stand for individual improvement; for it is by being incorporated into the one Body, that we have the promise of life; by becoming members of CHRIST, we have the gift of His SPIRIT.

Further, that unity is the condition of our receiving the privileges of the Gospel is confirmed by the mode in which the Prophets describe the Christian Church; that is, instead of addressing individuals as independent and separate from each other, they view the whole as of one body; viz. that one elect, holy, and highly-favoured Mother, of which individuals are but the children favoured through her. "Lift up thine eyes, and behold," says the inspired announcement; "all these gather themselves together, and come to thee." "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. . . . All thy children shall be taught of the LORD, and great shall be the peace of thy children."

But here it may be asked, How is this a doctrine to affect our practice? That Christians may be considered in our minds as one, is evident; it is evident, too, that they must be one in spirit; and that hereafter they will be one blessed company in heaven; but what follows now from believing that all saints are one in CHRIST? *This* will be found to follow: that, as far as may be, Christians should live together in a visible society here on earth, not as a confused unconnected multitude, but united and organized one with another, by an established order, so as evidently

to appear and to act as one. And this, you will at once see, *is* a doctrine nearly affecting our practice, yet neglected far and wide at this day.

Any complete and accurate proof indeed of this doctrine shall not here be attempted; nay, I shall not even bring together, as is often done⁵, the more obvious texts on which it rests; let it suffice, on this occasion, to make one or two general remarks bearing upon it, and strongly recommending it to us.

1. When, then, I am asked, why we Christians must unite into a visible body or society, I answer, first, that the very earnestness with which Scripture insists upon a spiritual unseen unity at present, and a future unity in heaven, of itself directs a pious mind to the imitation of that unity visibly on earth; for why should it be so continually mentioned in Scripture, unless the thought of it were intended to sink deep into our minds, and direct our conduct here?

2. But again, our SAVIOUR prays that we may be one in affection and in action; yet what possible way is there of many men acting *together*, except that of forming themselves into a visible body or society, regulated by certain laws and officers? and how can they act on a large scale, and consistently, unless it be a permanent body?

3. But, again, I might rest the necessity of Christian unity upon one single institution of our LORD's, the sacrament of Baptism. Baptism is a visible rite confessedly; and St. Paul tells us that, by it, individuals are incorporated into an already existing body. He is speaking of the visible body of Christians, when he says, "By one SPIRIT are we all baptized *into one body*⁶." But if every one who wishes to become a Christian must come to an existing visible body for the gift, as these words imply, it is plain that no number of men can ever, consistently with CHRIST's intention, ever set up a Church for themselves. All must receive their Baptism from Christians already baptized, and they in their turn must have received the sacrament from former Christians, themselves already incorporated in a body then previously existing. And thus we trace back a visible body or society even to the very time of the Apostles themselves; and it becomes plain

⁵ Vid. Tracts for the Times, No. 11.

⁶ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

that there can be no Christian in the whole world who has not received his title to the Christian privileges from the original apostolical society. So that the very sacrament of Baptism, as prescribed by our LORD and His Apostles, implies the existence of one visible association of Christians, and only one; and that permanent, carried on by the succession of Christians from the time of the Apostles to the very end of the world.

This is the *design* of CHRIST, I say, implied in the institution of the baptismal rite. Whether HE will be merciful, over and above His promise, to those who through ignorance do not comply with this design, or are in other respects irregular in their obedience, is a further question, foreign to our purpose. Still it remains the revealed design of CHRIST to connect all His followers in one by a visible ordinance of incorporation. The gospel faith has not been left to the world at large, recorded indeed in the Bible, but there left, like other important truths, to be taken up by men or rejected, as it may happen. Truths, indeed, in science and the arts *have* been thus left to the chance adoption or neglect of mankind; they are no one's property; cast at random upon the waves of human opinion. In any country soever, men may appropriate them at once, and form themselves at their will into a society for their extension. But for the more momentous truths of revealed religion, the GOD, who wrought by human means in their first introduction, still preserves them by the same. CHRIST formed a body; HE secured that body from dissolution by the bond of a sacrament. HE committed the privileges of His spiritual kingdom and the maintenance of His faith as a legacy to this baptized society; and into it, as a matter of historical fact, all the nations *have* flowed. Christianity has not been spread, as other systems, in an isolated manner, or by books; but from a centre, by regularly formed bodies, descendants of the three thousand, who, after St. Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost, joined themselves to the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship.

And to this apostolical body we must still look for the elementary gift of grace. Grace will not baptize us while we sit at home, slighting the means of God's appointment; but we must "*come* unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and an innumerable company of angels,

to the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

4. And now I will mention one other guarantee, which is especially suggested by our Lord's words in the text, for the visible unity and permanence of His church; and that is the appointment of rulers and ministers, entrusted with the gifts of grace, and these in succession. The ministerial orders are the ties which bind together the whole body of Christians in one; they are its organs, and they are moreover its moving principle.

Such an institution necessarily implies a succession, unless the appointment was always to be miraculous; for if men cannot administer to themselves the rite of regeneration, it is surely as little or much less reasonable to suppose that they could become Bishops or Priests on their own ordination. And St. Paul expressly shows his solicitude to secure such a continuity of clergy for his brethren: "I left thee in Crete," he says to Titus, "that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and *ordain elders* in every city, as I had appointed thee⁷." And to Timothy: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same *commit thou to faithful men*, who shall be able to teach others also⁸."

Now, we know that in civil matters nothing tends more powerfully to strengthen and perpetuate the body politic than hereditary rulers and nobles. The father's life, his principles and interests, are continued in the son; or rather, one life, one character, one idea, is carried on from age to age. Thus a dynasty or a nation is consolidated and secured; whereas where there is no regular succession and inheritance of this kind, there is no safeguard of stability and tranquillity; or rather, every risk of revolution. For what is to make a succeeding age think and act in the spirit of the foregoing, but that tradition of opinion and usage from mind to mind which a succession involves? In like manner the Christian ministry effects the unity, inward and without,

⁷ Titus i. 5.

⁸ 2 Tim. ii. 2. Vide also 1 Tim. v. 22.

of the Church to which it is attached. It is a continuous office, a standing ordinance; not, indeed, transmitted from father to son, as under the Mosaic covenant, for the vessels of the Christian election need to be more choice, as the treasure committed to them is more heavenly: but still the Apostles have not left it to the mere good pleasure and piety of the Christian body whether they will have a ministry or not. Each preceding generation of clergy have it in charge to ordain the next following to their sacred office. Consider what would be sure to happen, were there no such regular transmission of the divine gift, but each congregation were left to choose and create for itself its own minister. This would follow among other evil consequences, that what is every one's duty would prove, as the proverb runs, to be no one's. When their minister or teacher died or left them, there would be first a delay in choosing a fresh one, then a reluctance, then a forgetfulness. At last congregations would be left without teachers; and the bond of union being gone, the Church would be broken up. If a ministry be a necessary part of the Gospel dispensation, so must also a ministerial succession be. But the gift of grace has not thus dropped out of the hands of its ALL-MERCIFUL GIVER. He has committed to certain of His servants to provide for the continuance of its presence and administration after their own time. Each generation provides for the next; "the parents" lay up "for the children." And we know as a fact, that to this day the ministers of the Church universal are descended from the very Apostles. Amid all the changes of this world, the Church built upon St. Peter and the rest has continued until now in the unbroken line of the ministry. And to put other considerations out of sight, the mere fact in itself, that there has been this perpetual succession, this unforfeited inheritance, is sufficiently remarkable to attract our attention and excite our reverence. It approves itself to us as providential, and enlivens our hope and trust, that an ordinance, thus graciously protected for so many hundred years, will continue unto the end, and that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

I shall now bring these remarks to an end. And in ending, let me remind you, my brethren, how nearly the whole doctrine of ecclesiastical order is connected with personal obedience to God's

will. Obedience to the rule of order is every where enjoined in Scripture ; obedience to it is an act of faith. Were there ten thousand objections to it, yet, supposing unity were clearly and expressly enjoined by CHRIST, faith would obey in spite of them. But in matter of fact there are no such objections, nor any difficulty of any moment in the way of observing it. What, then, is to be said to the very serious circumstance, that, in spite of the absence of such impediments, vast numbers of men conceive that they may dispense with it at their good pleasure. In all the controversies of fifteen hundred years, the duty of continuing in order and in quietness was professed on all sides, as one of the first principles of the Gospel of CHRIST. But now multitudes, both in and without the Church, have set it up on high as a great discovery, and glory in it as a great principle, that forms are worth nothing. They allow themselves to wander about from one communion to another, or from church to meeting-house, and make it a boast that they belong to no party and are above all parties ; and argue, that provided men agree in some principal doctrines of the Gospel, it matters little whether they agree in any thing besides.

But those who boast of belonging to no party, and think themselves enlightened in this same confident boasting, I would, in all charity, remind that our SAVIOUR HIMSELF constituted what they must, on their principles, admit to be a party ; that the Christian Church is simply and literally a party or society instituted by CHRIST. HE bade us keep together. Fellowship with each other, mutual sympathy, and what spectators from without call party-spirit, all this is a prescribed duty ; and the sin and the mischief arise, not from having a party, but in having many parties, in separating from that one body or party which HE has appointed ; for when men split the one Church of CHRIST into fragments, they are doing their part to destroy it altogether.

But while the Church of CHRIST is literally what the world calls a party, it is something far higher also. It is not an institution of man, not a mere political establishment, not a creature of the state, depending on the state's breath, made and unmade at its will, but it is a divine society, a great work of God, a true relic of CHRIST and His Apostles, as Elijah's mantle upon Elisha, a bequest which HE has left us, and which we must keep

for His sake ; a holy treasure which, like the ark of Israel, looks like a thing of earth, and is exposed to the ill usage and contempt of the world, but which in its own time, and according to the decree of Him who gave it, displays to-day, and to-morrow, and the third day, its miracles, as of mercy so of judgment, "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail."

SERMON CXLVI.

STEADFASTNESS IN THE OLD PATHS.

JER. vi. 16.

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”

REVERENCE for the old paths is a chief Christian duty. We look to the future indeed with hope; yet this need not stand in the way of our dwelling on the past days of the Church with affection and deference. This is the feeling of our own Church, as continually expressed in the Prayer Book;—not to slight what has gone before, not to seek after some new thing, not to attempt discoveries in religion, but to keep what has once for all been committed to her keeping, and to be at rest.

Now it may be asked, “Why should we for ever be looking back at past times? were men perfect then? is it not possible to improve on the knowledge then possessed?” Let us examine this question.

In what respect should we follow old times? Now here there is this obvious maxim—what God has given us from heaven cannot be improved, what man discovers for himself does admit of improvement: we follow old times then *so far* as God has spoken in them; but in those respects in which God

has not spoken in them, we are not bound to follow them. Now what is the knowledge which God has *not* thought fit to reveal to us, *knowledge connected merely with this present world*. All this we have been left to acquire for ourselves. Whatever may have been told to Adam in paradise, or to Noah, about which we know nothing, still at least since that time no divinely authenticated directions (it would appear) have been given to the world at large, on subjects relating merely to this our temporal state of being. How we may till our lands and increase our crops ; how we may build our houses, and buy and sell and get gain ; how we may cross the sea in ships ; how we may make "fine linen for the merchant," or, like Tubal-Cain, be artificers in brass and iron : as to these objects of this world, necessary indeed for the time, not lastingly important, God has given us no clear instruction. He has not set His sanction here upon any rules of art, and told us what is best. They have been found out by man (as far as we know), and improved by man ; and the first essays, as might be expected, were the rudest and least successful. Here then we have no need to follow the old ways. Besides, in many of these arts and pursuits, there is really neither right nor wrong at all ; but the good varies with times and places. Each country has its own way, which is best for itself, and bad for others.

Again, God has given us no authority in questions of science. The heavens above, and the earth under our feet, are full of wonders, and have within them their own vast history. But the knowledge of the secrets they contain, the tale of their past revolutions, is not given us from divine revelation ; but left to man to attain by himself. And here again, since discovery is difficult, the old knowledge is generally less sure and complete than the modern knowledge. If we wish to boast about little matters, *we* know more about the motions of the heavenly bodies than Abraham, whose seed was in number as the stars ; we can measure the earth, and fathom the sea, and weigh the air, more accurately than Moses, the inspired historian of the creation ; and we can discuss the varied inhabitants of this earth better than Solomon, though "he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall and of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things,

and of fishes ¹." The world is more learned in these things than of old, probably will learn more still; a vast prospect is open to it, and an intoxicating one. Like the children of Cain, before the flood came and destroyed them all, men may increase and abound in such curious or merely useful knowledge; nay, there is no limit to the progress of the human mind here; we may build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach almost to the very heavens.

Such is the knowledge which time has perfected, and in which the old paths are commonly the least direct and safe. But let us turn to that knowledge which God has given, and which therefore does not admit of improvement by lapse of time; this is *religious knowledge*. Here, whether a man might or might not have found out the truth for himself, or how far he was able without divine assistance, waiving this question, which is nothing to the purpose, as a fact it has been from the beginning given him by revelation. God taught Adam how to please HIM, and Noah, and Abraham, and Job. HE has taught every nation all over the earth sufficiently for the moral training of every individual. In all these cases, the world's part of the work has been to pervert the truth, not to disengage it from obscurity. The new ways are the crooked ones. The nearer we mount up to the time of Adam, or Noah, or Abraham, or Job, the purer light of truth we gain; as we recede from it we meet with superstitions, fanatical excesses, idolatries, and immoralities. So again in the case of the Jewish Church, since God expressly gave them a precise law, it is clear man could not improve upon it; he could but add the "traditions of men." Nothing was to be looked for from the cultivation of the human mind. "To the law and to the testimony" was the appeal; and any deviation from it was, not a sign of increasing illumination, but "because there was no light" in the authors of innovation. Lastly, in the Christian Church, we cannot add or take away, as regards the doctrines that are contained in the inspired volume, as regards the faith once delivered to the saints. Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST².

But it may be said that, though the word of God is an infallible rule of faith, yet it requires interpreting, and why, as

¹ 1 Kings iv. 33.

² 1 Cor. iii. 11.

time goes on, should we not discover in it more than we at present know on the subject of religion and morals ?

But this is hardly a question of practical importance to us as individuals ; for in truth a very little knowledge is enough for teaching a man his duty : and, since Scripture is intended to teach us our duty, surely it was never intended as a storehouse of mere knowledge. Discoveries then in the details of morals and religion, by means of the inspired volume, whether possible or not, must not be looked out for, as the expectation may unsettle the mind, and take it off from matters of duty. Certainly all curious questions at least are forbidden us by Scripture, even though Scripture may be found adequate to answer them.

This should be insisted on. Do we think to become better men by knowing more ? Little knowledge is required for religious obedience. The poor and rich, the learned and unlearned, are here on a level. We have all of us the means of doing our duty ; we have not the *will*, and this no knowledge can give. We have need to subdue our own minds, and this no other person *can* do for us. The case is different in matters of learning and science. There others can and do labour for us ; *we* can make use of *their* labours ; we begin where they ended ; thus things progress, and each successive age knows more than the preceding. But in religion each must begin, go on, and end, for himself. The religious history of each individual is as solitary and complete as the history of the world. Each man will, of course, gain more knowledge as he studies Scripture more, and prays and meditates more ; but he cannot make another man wise or holy by his own advance in wisdom or holiness. When children cease to be born children, because they are born late in the world, when we can reckon the world's past centuries for the age of this generation, then only can the world increase in real excellence and truth as it grows older. The character will always require forming, evil will ever need rooting out of each heart ; the grace to go before and to aid us in our moral discipline must ever come fresh and immediate from the HOLY SPIRIT. So the world ever remains in its infancy, as regards the cultivation of moral truth ; for the knowledge required for practice is little, and admits of little increase, except in the case of individuals, and then to them alone ; and it cannot be handed on to

another. "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be," such is the general history of man's moral discipline, running parallel to the unchanging glory of that All Perfect God, who is its Author and Finisher.

Practical religious knowledge, then, is a personal gift, and, further, a gift from God; and, therefore, as experience has hitherto shown, more likely to be obscured than advanced by the lapse of time. But further, we know of the existence of an evil principle in the world, corrupting and resisting the truth in its measure, according to the truth's clearness and purity. Whether it be from the sinfulness of our nature, or from the malignity of Satan, striving with peculiar enmity against divine truth, certain it is that the best gifts of God have been the most woefully corrupted. It was prophesied from the beginning, that the serpent should bruise the heel of HIM who was ultimately to triumph over him; and so it has ever been. Our SAVIOUR, who was the Truth itself, was the most spitefully entreated of all by the world. It has been the case with His followers too. He was crucified with thieves; they have been united and blended against their will with the worst and basest of mankind. The purer and more valuable the gift which God bestows, far from this being a security for the truth's abiding and advancing, rather the more grievously has been the gift abused. St. John even seems to make the greater wickedness in the world the clear consequence and evidence of our LORD's having made His appearing. "Little children, it is the last time" (*i. e.* the time of the Christian Dispensation) "and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists, *whereby we know* that it is the last time³." St. Paul drew the same picture. So far from anticipating brighter times in store for the Church before the end, he portends evil only. "This know" (he says to Timothy), "that in the last days perilous times will come. . . . Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived⁴." In these and other passages surely there is no encouragement to look out for a more enlightened, peaceful, and pure state of the Church than it enjoys at present: rather, there is a call on us to consider the old and

³ 1 John ii. 18.

⁴ 2 Tim. iii. 13.

original way as the best, and all deviations from it, though they seem to promise an easier, safer, and shorter road, yet as really either tending another way, or leading to the right object with much hazard and many obstacles.

Such is the case as regards the knowledge of our duty,—that kind of knowledge which alone is really worth earnest seeking. And there is an important reason why we should acquiesce in it;—because the conviction that things are so has no slight influence in forming our minds into that perfection of the religious character at which it is our duty ever to be aiming. While we think it possible to make some great and important improvements in the subject of religion, we shall be unsettled, restless, impatient; we shall be drawn from the consideration of improving ourselves, and from using the day while it is given us, by the visions of a deceitful hope, which promises to make rich but tendeth to penury. On the other hand, if we feel that the way is altogether closed against discoveries in religion, as being neither practicable nor desirable, it is likely we shall be drawn more entirely and seriously to our own personal advancement in holiness; our eyes being withdrawn from external prospects will look more at home. We shall think less of circumstances, and more of duties under them, whatever they are. In proportion as we cease to be theorists we shall become practical men; we shall have less of self-confidence and arrogance, more of inward humility and diffidence; we shall be less likely to despise others, and think of our own intellectual powers with less complacency.

It is one great peculiarity of the Christian character to be dependent. Men of the world, indeed, in proportion as they are active and enterprising, boast of their independence, and are proud of having obligations to no one. But it is the Christian's excellence to be diligent and watchful, to work and persevere, and yet to be in spirit *dependent*; to be willing to serve, and to rejoice in the permission; to be able to view himself in a subordinate place; to love to sit in the dust. Though in the Church a son of God, he takes pleasure in considering himself CHRIST'S "servant" and "slave;" he feels glad whenever he can put himself to shame. So it is the natural bent of his mind freely and affectionately to visit and trace the footsteps of the saints, to sound the praises of the great men of old who have wrought

wonders in the Church and whose words still live ; being jealous of their honour, and feeling it to be even too great a privilege for such as he is to be put in trust with the faith once delivered to them, and to follow them strictly in the narrow way, even as they have followed CHRIST. To the ears of such persons the words of the text are as sweet music : “ Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”

The history of the Old Dispensation affords us a remarkable confirmation of what has been argued from these words ; for in the time of the Law there was an increase of religious knowledge by fresh revelations. From the time of Samuel especially to the time of Malachi, the Church was bid look forward for a growing illumination, which, though not necessary for religious obedience, subserved the establishment of religious comfort. Now, I wish you to observe how careful the inspired prophets of Israel are to prevent any kind of disrespect being shown to the memory of former times, on account of that increase of religious knowledge with which the later ages were favoured ; and if such reverence for the past were a duty among the Jews when the SAVIOUR was still to come, much more is it the duty of Christians, who expect no new revelation, and who, though they look forward in hope, yet see the future only in the mirror of times and persons past, who (in the angel’s words) “ wait for that same JESUS . . . so to come in like manner as they saw HIM go into heaven.”

Now, as to the reverence enjoined and taught the Jews towards persons and times past, we may notice first the commandment given them to honour and obey their parents and elders. This, indeed, is a natural law. But that very circumstance surely gives force to the express and repeated injunctions given them to observe it, sanctioned too (as it was) with a special promise. Natural affection might have taught it ; but it was rested by the Law on a higher sanction. Next, this duty of reverently regarding past times was taught by such general injunctions (more or less express) as the text. It is remarkable, too, when Micah would tell the Jews that the legal sacrifices appointed in time past were inferior to the moral duties, he states it not as a new truth, but refers to its announcement by

a prophet in Moses' age,—to the answer of Balaam to Balak, king of Moab.

But, further, to bind them to the observance of this duty, the past was made the pledge of the future, hope was grounded upon memory ; all prayer for favour sent them back to the old mercies of GOD. “The LORD *hath been* mindful of us, HE *will* bless us⁵ ;” this was the form of their humble expectation. The favour vouchsafed to Abraham and Israel, and the deliverance from Egypt, were the objects on which hope dwelt, and were made the types of blessings in prospect. For instance, out of the many passages which might be cited, Isaiah says, “Awake . . . O arm of the LORD, *as in the ancient days, in the generations of old*⁶.” Micah, “Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitary in the wood, in the midst of Carmel ; let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, *as in the days of old* ; according to the days of thy coming out of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous things⁷.” The Psalms abound with like references to past mercies, as pledges and types of future. Prophesying of the reign of CHRIST, David says, “The LORD said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea,” and Moses too, speaking to the Israelites—“*Remember the days of old*, consider the years of many generations ; ask thy father and he will show thee ; thy elders, and they will tell thee⁸.” Accordingly, while a coming SAVIOUR was predicted, still the claims of past times on Jewish piety were maintained, by His being represented by the prophets under the name and character of David, or in the dress and office of Aaron ; so that, the clearer the revelation of the glory in prospect, in the same degree greater honour was put upon the former Jewish saints who typified it. In like manner the blessings promised to the Christian Church are granted to it in the character of Israel, or of Jerusalem, or of Zion.

Lastly, as Moses directed the eyes of his people towards the line of prophets which the LORD their GOD was to raise up from among them, ending in the MESSIAH, they in turn dutifully exalt Moses, whose system they were superseding. Samuel, David,

⁵ Psalm cxv. 12.

⁶ Isa. li. 9.

⁷ Mic. vii. 14, 15.

⁸ Deut. xxxii. 7.

Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, each in succession, bear testimony to Moses. Malachi, the last of the prophets, while predicting the coming of John the Baptist, still gives this charge, “*Remember ye the law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments*⁹.” In like manner in the New Testament the last of the prophets and apostles describes the saints as singing “the song of Moses, the servant of God” (this is his honourable title, as elsewhere), “*and the song of the LAMB*¹.” Above all, our blessed LORD HIMSELF sums up the whole subject we have been reviewing, both the doctrine and Jewish illustration of it, in His own authoritative words,—“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead².” After this sanction, it is needless to refer to the reverence with which St. Paul regards the law of Moses, and to the commemoration he has made of the Old Testament saints in the eleventh of his Epistle to the Hebrews.

Oh that we had duly drunk into this spirit of reverence and godly fear. Doubtless we are far above the Jews in our privileges; we are favoured with the news of redemption; we know doctrines, which righteous men of old time earnestly desired to be told, and were not. To us is revealed the Eternal SON, the Only-begotten of the FATHER, full of grace and truth. We are branches of the True Vine, which is sprung out of the earth and spread abroad. We have received Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, pastors, and teachers. We celebrate those true Festivals which the Jews possessed only in shadow. For us CHRIST has died; on us the SPIRIT has descended. In these respects we are honoured and privileged, oh how far above all ages before HE came! Yet our honours are our shame, when we contrast the glory given us with our love of the world, our fear of men, our lightness of mind, our sensuality, our gloomy tempers. What need have we to look with wonder and reverence at those saints of the Old Covenant, who with less advantages yet so far surpassed us; and still more at those of the Christian Church, who both had higher gifts of grace and profited by them!

⁹ Mal. iv. 4.¹ Rev. xv. 3.² Luke xvi. 31.

What need have we to humble ourselves; to pray God not to leave us, though we have left Him; to pray Him to give us back what we have lost, to receive a repentant people, to renew in us a right heart and give us a religious will, and to enable us to follow Him perseveringly in His narrow and humbling way.

SERMON CXLVII.

REVERENCE IN WORSHIP.

1 SAMUEL ii. 18.

“Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.”

SAMUEL, viewed in his place in sacred history, that is, in the course of events which connect Moses with CHRIST, appears as a great ruler and teacher of his people; this is his prominent character. He was the first of the prophets; yet, when we read the sacred narrative itself, in which his life is set before us, I suppose those passages are the more striking and impressive which represent him, in the office which belonged to him by birth, as a Levite, or minister of God. He was taken into God's special service from the first; he lived in His Temple; nay, while yet a child, he was honoured with the apparel of a sacred function, as the text tells us, “he ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.”

His mother had “given him unto the LORD all the days of his life¹,” by a solemn vow before his birth; and in him, if in any one, were fulfilled the words of the Psalmist, “Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, they will be always praising Thee².”

Such a constant abode in God's house would make common minds only familiar with holy things, and irreverent; but where

¹ 1 Sam. i. 11.

² Psalm lxxxiv. 4.

God's grace is present in the heart, the effect is the reverse; which we might be sure would happen in the case of Samuel. "The LORD was with him," we are told; and therefore the more the outward signs of that LORD met his eye, the more reverent he became, not the more presuming. The more he acquainted himself with GOD, the greater would be his awe and holy fear.

Thus the first notice we have of his ministering before the LORD, reminds us of the decency and gravity necessary at all times, and in all persons, in approaching HIM. "He ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod." His mother had made him yearly a little coat for his common use, but in Divine Service he wore, not this, but a garment which would both express, and impress upon him, reverence.

And, in like manner, in his old age, when Saul sent to seek David at Naioth, where Samuel was, his messengers found Samuel and the prophets under him all in decent order. "They saw the company of prophets prophesying, and Samuel over them." And this was so impressive a sight, that it became an instrument of God's supernatural power towards them, and they prophesied also.

On the other hand, if we would have an example of the want of this reverence, we have it in Saul himself, the reprobate king, who, when he was on his way to Naioth, and was visited by God's HOLY SPIRIT, did not thereupon receive the garment of salvation, nor was clothed in righteousness, but behaved himself in an unseemly wild way, as one whose destitution and shame were but detected by the visitation. He stript off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel, and lay down in that state all that day and all that night.

This difference we see even at this day :—of persons professing religion, some are like Samuel, some like Saul; some (as it were) cast off their garments and prophesy in disorder and extravagance; others minister before the LORD, "girded with a linen ephod," with "their loins girt and their lamps burning," like men awfully expecting the coming of their great and glorious Judge. By the latter, I mean the true children of the Holy Catholic Church; by the former, I mean heretics and schismatics.

There have ever been from the first these two kinds of Christians—those who belonged to the Church, and those who

did not. There never was a time since the Apostles' day, when the Church was not; and there never was a time but men were to be found who preferred some other way of worship to the Church's way. These two kinds of professed Christians ever have been—Church Christians, and Christians not of the Church; and it is remarkable, I say, that while, on the one hand, reverence for sacred things has been a characteristic of Church Christians on the whole, so, want of reverence has been the characteristic on the whole of Christians not of the Church. The one have prophesied after the figure of Samuel, the other after the figure of Saul.

Of course there are many exceptions to this remark in the case of individuals. Of course I am not speaking of inconsistent and thoughtless persons in the Church, or out of it; but of those who act up to what they profess. I mean that zealous, earnest, and faithful members of the Church have generally been reverent; and zealous, earnest, and faithful members of other religious bodies have generally been irreverent. Again, after all, there will be real exceptions in the case of individuals which we cannot account for; but I mean that, *on the whole*, it will be found that reverence is one of the marks or notes of the Church; true though it may be that some particular individuals, who have kept apart from it, have not been without a reverential spirit notwithstanding.

Indeed so natural is the connexion between a reverential spirit in worshipping God, and faith in God, that the wonder only is, how any one can for a moment imagine he has faith in God, and yet allow himself to be irreverent towards HIM. To believe in God, is to believe the being and presence of One who is All holy, and All powerful, and All gracious; how can a man really believe thus of HIM, and yet make free with HIM? it is almost a contradiction in terms. Hence even heathen religions have ever considered faith and reverence identical. To believe, and not to revere, to worship familiarly, and at one's ease, is an anomaly and a prodigy unknown even to false religions, to say nothing of the true one. Not only the Jewish and Christian religions, which are directly from God, inculcate the spirit of "reverence and godly fear," but those other religions which have existed, or exist, whether in the East or the South, inculcate the same. Worship, forms of worship,—such as bowing the knee, taking

off the shoes, keeping silence, a prescribed dress, and the like, are considered as necessary for a due approach to God. The whole world, differing about so many things, differing in creed and rule of life, yet agree in this—that God being our Creator, a certain self-abasement of the whole man is the duty of the creature; that HE is in heaven, we upon earth; that HE is All-glorious, and we worms of the earth and insects of a day.

But those who have separated from the Church of Christ have in this respect fallen into greater than pagan error. They may be said to form an exception to the concordant voice of a whole world, always and every where; they break in upon the unanimous suffrage of mankind, and determine, at least by their conduct, that reverence and awe are not primary religious duties. They have considered that in some way or other, either by God's favour or by their own illumination, they are brought so near to God that they have no need to fear at all, or to put any restraint upon their words or thoughts when addressing HIM. They have considered awe to be superstition, and reverence to be slavery. They have learnt to be familiar and free with sacred things, as it were, on principle. I think this is really borne out by facts, and will approve itself to inquirers as true in substance, however one man will differ from another in the words in which he would express the fact itself.

Samuel was a little child who had never fallen away from God, but by His grace had ever served HIM. Let us take a very different instance, the instance of a penitent sinner as set before us in the parable of the Publican and Pharisee. I need hardly say which of the two was the most pleasing to God—the Publican; whereas the Pharisee was not accepted by HIM. Now what did the Pharisee do? HE did not even go so far as to behave in an unseemly, extravagant way, he was grave and solemn, and yet what he did was enough to displease God, because he took too much upon himself, and made too much of himself. Though grave and devout, he was not reverent; he spoke in a haughty proud way, and made a long sentence, thanking God that he was not as other men are, and despising the Publican. Such was the behaviour of the Pharisee; but the Publican behaved very differently. Observe how he came to worship God; “he stood afar off; he lift not up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote

upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner³." You see his words were few, and almost broken, and his whole conduct humble and reverent; he felt that God was in heaven, he upon earth, God All holy and Almighty, and he a poor sinner.

Now all of us are sinners, all of us have need to come to God as the Publican did; every one, if he does but search his heart, and watch his conduct, and try to do his duty, will find himself to be full of sins which provoke God's wrath. I do not mean to say that all men are equally sinners; some are wilful sinners, and of them there is no hope, till they repent; others sin, but they try to avoid sinning, pray to God to make them better, and come to Church to be made better; but all men are quite sinners enough to make it their duty to behave as the Publican. Every one ought to come into Church as the Publican did, to say in his heart, "LORD, I am not worthy to enter this sacred place; my only plea for coming are the merits of JESUS CHRIST my SAVIOUR." When, then, a man enters Church, as many do, carelessly and familiarly, thinking of himself, not of God, sits down coldly and at his ease, either does not say a prayer at all, or merely hides his face for form's sake, sitting all the while, not standing or kneeling; then looks about to see who is in the Church, and who not, and makes himself easy and comfortable in his seat, and uses the kneeler for no other purpose than to put his feet upon; in short, comes to Church as a place, not of meeting God and His holy Angels, but of seeing what is to be seen with the bodily eyes, and hearing what is to be heard with the bodily ears, and then goes and gives his judgment about the sermon freely, and says, "I do not like this or that," or "this is a good argument, but that is a bad one," or "I do not like this person so much as that," and so on; I mean when a man acts in all respects as if he was at home, and not in God's House,—all I can say is, that he ventures to do in God's presence what neither Cherubim nor Seraphim venture to do, for they cover their faces, and, as if not daring to address God, praise Him to each other, in few words, and those continually repeated, saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD of Sabaoth.

What I have said has been enough to suggest what it is to

³ Luke xviii. 13.

serve God acceptably, viz. "with reverence and godly fear," as St. Paul says. We must not aim at forms for their own sake, but we must keep in mind where we are, and then forms will come into our service naturally. We must in all respects act as if we saw God; that is, if we believe that God is here, we shall keep silence; we shall not laugh, or talk, or whisper during the Service, as many young persons do; we shall not gaze about us. We shall follow the example set us by the Church itself. I mean, as the words in which we pray in Church are not our own, neither will our looks, or our postures, or our thoughts, be our own. We shall, in the prophet's words, not "do our own ways" there, nor "find our own pleasure," nor "speak our own words;" in imitation of all Saints before us, including the Holy Apostles, who never spoke their own words in solemn worship, but either those which CHRIST taught them, or which the HOLY GHOST taught them, or which the Old Testament taught them. This is the reason why we always pray from a book in Church; the Apostles said to CHRIST, "LORD, teach us to pray," and our LORD graciously gave them the prayer called the LORD's Prayer. For the same reason we too use the LORD's Prayer, and we use the Psalms of David and other holy men, and hymns which are given us in Scripture, thinking it better to use the words of inspired Prophets than our own. And for the same reason we use a number of short petitions, such as "LORD, have mercy upon us," "O LORD, save the Queen," "O LORD, open Thou our lips," and the like, not using many words, or rounding our sentences, or allowing ourselves to enlarge in prayer.

Thus all we do in Church is done on a principle of *reverence*; it is done with the thought that we are in God's presence. But irreverent persons, not understanding this, when they come into Church, and find nothing there of a striking kind, when they find every thing is read from a book, and in a calm quiet way, and still more, when they come a second and a third time, and find every thing just the same, over and over again, they are offended and tired. "There is nothing," they say, "to rouse or interest them." They think God's service dull and tiresome, if I may use such words; for they do not come to Church to honour God, but to please themselves. They want something new. They think the prayers are long, and wish that there was more preach-

ing, and that in a striking oratorical way, with loud voice and florid style. And when they observe that the worshippers in Church are serious and subdued in their manner, and will not look, and speak, and move as much at their ease as out of doors, or in their own houses, then, (if they are very profane,) they ridicule them, as weak and superstitious. Now is it not plain that those who are thus tired, and wearied, and impatient at our sacred services below, would most certainly get tired and wearied with heaven above; because there the Cherubim and Seraphim "rest not day and night," saying, "Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY." Such as this, too, will be the way of the Saints in glory, for we are told that there will be a great voice of much people saying, Alleluia; and again they said Alleluia; and the four-and-twenty elders said Alleluia; and a voice of many waters and of mighty thunderings said Alleluia. Such, too, was our LORD's way, when in His agony HE three times repeated the same words, "Thy will, not Mine, be done." It is the delight of all holy beings, who stand around the Throne, to use one and the same form of worship; they are not tired, it is ever new pleasure to them to say them anew. They are never tired; but surely all those persons would be soon tired of hearing them, instead of taking part in their glorious chant, who are wearied of Church now, and seek for something more attractive and rousing.

Let all persons, then, know for certain, and be assured beforehand, that if they come to Church to have their hearts put into strange and new forms, and their feelings moved and agitated, they come for what they will not find. We wish them to join Saints and Angels in worshipping GOD; to say with the Seraphim, "Holy LORD GOD of Sabaoth;" to say with the Angels, "Glory to GOD in the highest, and in earth peace, good-will towards men;" to say after our LORD and SAVIOUR, "Our Father, which art in heaven," and what follows; to say with St. Mary, "My soul doth magnify the LORD;" with St. Simeon, "LORD, now lettest THOU Thy servant depart in peace;" with the Three Children who were cast into the fiery furnace, "O all ye works of the LORD, bless ye the LORD, praise HIM, and magnify HIM for ever;" with the Apostles, "I believe in GOD the FATHER ALMIGHTY, Maker of heaven and earth; and in

JESUS CHRIST His only SON our LORD; and in the HOLY GHOST." We wish to read to them words of inspired Scripture, and to explain its doctrine to them soberly after its pattern. This is what we wish them to say, again and again, "LORD, have mercy," "We beseech THEE to hear us, O LORD," "Good LORD deliver us," "Glory be to the FATHER, and to the SON, and to the HOLY GHOST." All holy creatures are praising God continually—we hear them not, still they are praising HIM and praying to HIM. All the Angels, the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble army of Martyrs, the Holy Church universal, all good men all over the earth, all the spirits and souls of the righteous, all our friends who have died in God's faith and fear, all are praising and praying to God; we come to Church to join them, our voices are very feeble, our hearts are very earthly, our faith is very weak. We do not deserve to come, surely not;—consider what a great favour it is to be allowed to join in the praises and prayers of the City of the Living God, we being such sinners;—we should not be allowed to come at all but for the merits of our LORD and SAVIOUR. Let us firmly look at the Cross, that is the token of our salvation. Let us ever remember the sacred Name of JESUS, in which devils were cast out of old time. These are the thoughts with which we should come to Church; and if we come a little before the Service begins, and want something to think about, we may look, not at who are coming in and when, but at the building itself, which will remind us of many good things; or we may look into the Prayer Book for such passages as the 84th Psalm, which runs thus: "O how amiable are Thy dwellings, THOU LORD of hosts! my soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the Courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh rejoice in the Living God."

Such will be our conduct and our thoughts in Church, if we be true Christians; and I have been giving this description of them, not only for the sake of those who are not reverent, but for the sake of those who try to be so,—for the sake of all of us who try to come to Church soberly and quietly, that we may know why we do so, and may have an answer if any one asks us. Such will be our conduct even when we are out of Church. I mean, those who come to Church again and again, in this humble

and heavenly way, will find the effect of it, through God's mercy, in their daily walk. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, where he had been forty days and forty nights, his face quite shone and dazzled the people, so that he was obliged to put a veil over it. Such is the effect of God's grace on those who come to Church in faith and love; their mode of acting and talking, their very manner and behaviour, show they have been in God's presence. They are ever sober, cheerful, modest, serious, and earnest. They do not disgrace their profession, they do not take God's Name in vain, they do not use passionate language, they do not lie, they do not jest in an unseemly way, they do not use shameful words, they keep their mouth; they have kept their mouth in Church, and avoided rashness, so they are enabled to keep it at home. They have bright, smiling, pleasant faces. They do not wear a mock gravity, and, like the hypocrites whom CHRIST speaks of, make themselves sad countenances, but they are easy and natural, and without meaning it cannot help showing in their look, and voice, and manner, that they are God's dear children, and have His grace within them. They are civil and obliging, kind and friendly; not envious or jealous, not quarrelsome, not spiteful or resentful, not selfish, not covetous, not niggardly, not lovers of the world, not afraid of the world, not afraid of what man can do against them.

Such are they who worship God in spirit and in truth in Church; they love HIM and they fear HIM. And, besides those who profess to love without fearing, there are two sorts of persons who fall short; first, and worst, those who neither fear nor love God; and, secondly, those who fear HIM, but do not love HIM. There are, every where, alas, some bold, proud, discontented persons, who, as far as they dare, speak against religion altogether; they do not come to Church, or if they come, come to see about what is going on, not to worship. These are those who neither love nor fear; but the more common sort of persons are they who have a sort of fear of God without the love of HIM, who feel and know that some things are right, and others wrong, yet do not adhere to the right; who are conscious they sin from time to time, and that wilfully, who have an uneasy conscience, who fear to die; who have, indeed, a sort of serious feeling about sacred things, who reverence the Church and its Ordinances,

who would be shocked at open impiety, who do not make a mock at Baptism, much less at the Holy Communion, but, still, who have not the heart to love and obey God. This, I fear, my brethren, may be the state of some of you. See to it, that you are clear from the sin of knowing and confessing what is your duty, and yet not doing it. If you be such, and make no effort to become better; if you do not come to Church honestly, for God's grace to make you better, and seriously strive to be better and to do your duty more thoroughly, it will profit you nothing to be ever so reverent in your manner, and ever so regular in coming to Church. God hates the worship of the mere lips; HE requires the worship of the heart. A person may bow, and kneel, and look religious, but he is not at all the nearer heaven, unless he tries to obey God in all things, and to do his duty. But if he does honestly strive to obey God, then his outward manner will be reverent also; decent forms will become natural to him; holy ordinances, though coming to him from the Church, will at the same time come (as it were) from his heart; they will be part of himself, and he will as little think of dispensing with them as he would dispense with his ordinary apparel, nay, as he could dispense with tongue or hand in speaking or doing. This is the true way of doing devotional service; not to have feelings without acts, or acts without feelings; but both to do and to feel;—to see that our hearts and bodies are both sanctified together, and become one; the heart ruling our limbs, and making the whole man serve HIM, who has redeemed the whole man, body as well as soul.

S E R M O N CXLVIII.

DIVINE CALLS.

I SAMUEL iii. 10.

“And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel.
Then Samuel answered, Speak; for Thy servant heareth.”

IN the narrative of which these words form part, we have a remarkable instance of a divine call, and the manner in which it is our duty to meet it. Samuel was from a child brought to the house of the LORD; and in due time he was called to a sacred office, and made a prophet. He was called, and he forthwith answered the call. God said, Samuel, Samuel. He did not understand at first who called, and what was meant; but on going to Eli he learned who spoke, and what his answer should be. So when God called again, he said, “Speak, LORD, for Thy servant heareth.” Here is prompt obedience.

Very different in its circumstances was St. Paul’s call, but resembling Samuel’s in this respect, that, when God called, he too promptly obeyed. When St. Paul heard the voice from heaven, he said at once, trembling and astonished, “LORD, what wilt Thou have me to do¹?” This same obedient temper of his is stated or implied in the two accounts which he himself gives of his miraculous conversion. In the 22nd chapter he says, “And I said, What shall I do, Lord?” And in the 26th, after telling King Agrippa what the Divine Speaker said to him, he adds

¹ Acts ix. 6.

what comes to the same thing, "Whereupon, O King Agrippa, *I was not disobedient* unto the heavenly vision." Such is the account given us in St. Paul's case of that first step in God's gracious dealings with him, which ended in his eternal salvation. "Whom HE did foreknow, HE also did predestinate²;"—"whom HE did predestinate, them HE also called"—here was the first act which took place in time—"and whom HE called, them HE also justified; and whom HE justified, them HE also glorified." Such is the divine series of mercies; and you see that it was prompt obedience on St. Paul's part which carried on the first act of divine grace into the second, which knit together the first mercy to the second. "Whom HE called, them HE also justified." St. Paul was called when CHRIST appeared to him in the way; he was justified when Ananias came to baptize him: and it was prompt obedience which led him from his call to his baptism. "LORD, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The answer was, "Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do³." And when he came to Damascus, Ananias was sent to him by the same LORD who had appeared to him; and he reminded St. Paul of this when he came to him. The LORD had appeared for his call; the LORD appeared for his justification.

This, then, is the lesson taught us by St. Paul's conversion, promptly to obey the call. If we do obey it, to GOD be the glory, for HE it is works in us. If we do not obey, to ourselves be all the shame, for sin and unbelief work in us. Such being the state of the case, let us take care to act accordingly,—being exceedingly alarmed lest we should *not* obey God's voice when HE calls us, yet not taking praise or credit to ourselves if we *do* obey it. This has been the temper of all saints from the beginning—working out their salvation with fear and trembling, yet ascribing the work to HIM who wrought in them to will and do of His good pleasure; obeying the call, and giving thanks to HIM who calls, to HIM who fulfils in them their calling. So much on the pattern afforded us by St. Paul.

Very different in its circumstances was Samuel's call, when a child in the temple, yet resembling St. Paul's in this particular,—

² Rom. viii. 29.

³ Acts xxii. 10.

that for our instruction the circumstance of his obedience to it is brought out prominently even in the words put into his mouth by Eli in the text. Eli taught him what to say, when called by the Divine voice. Accordingly, when "the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel, then Samuel answered, Speak, LORD, for Thy servant heareth."

Such, again, is the temper of mind expressed by holy David in the 27th Psalm, "When THOU saidst, Seek ye My face, my heart said unto THEE, Thy face, LORD, will I seek."

And this temper, which in the above instances is illustrated in words spoken, is in the case of many other Saints in Scripture shown in word and deed; and, on the other hand, is illustrated negatively by being neglected in the case of others therein mentioned, who might have entered into life, and did not.

For instance, we read of the Apostles, that "JESUS, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And HE saith unto them, Follow ME, and I will make you fishers of men. And they *straightway* left their nets and followed HIM⁴." Again; when HE saw James and John with their father Zebedee, "HE *called* them; and they *immediately left the ship, and their father, and followed HIM*." And so of St. Matthew at the receipt of custom, "HE said unto him, Follow ME; and he left all, rose up, and followed HIM."

Again, we are told in St. John's Gospel, "JESUS would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto HIM, *Follow ME*." Again, "Philip findeth Nathanael," and in like manner says to him, "Come and see." "JESUS saw Nathanael coming unto HIM, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

On the other hand, the young ruler shrunk from the call, and found it a hard saying, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, and follow ME. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions⁵." Others who seemed to waver, or rather who asked for some little delay from human feeling, were rebuked for want

⁴ Matth. iv. 18—20.

⁵ Ibid. xix. 21, 22.

of promptitude in their obedience;—for time stays for no one; the word of call is spoken and is gone; if we do not seize the moment, it is lost. CHRIST was on His road heavenward. HE walked by the sea of Galilee⁶; HE “passed forth⁷,” HE “passed by⁸,” HE did not stop; all men must join HIM, or HE would be calling on others beyond them⁹. “HE said to another, Follow ME. But he said, LORD, suffer me first to go and bury my father. JESUS said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, LORD, I will follow THEE: but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And JESUS said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God¹.”

Not unlike these last instances are the circumstances of the call of the great prophet Elisha, though he does not seem to have incurred blame from Elijah for his lingering on the thoughts of what he was leaving. “He found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing . . . Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle over him.” He did not stay; he passed on, and Elisha was obliged to run after him. “And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee.” This the prophet allowed him to do, and after that “he arose and followed Elijah, and ministered unto him.”

Or once more consider the circumstances of the call of Abraham, the father of all who believe. He was called from his father’s house, but was not told whither. St. Paul was bid go to Damascus, and there he was to receive further directions. In like manner Abraham left his home for a land “that I *will* show thee²,” says ALMIGHTY GOD. Accordingly he went out, “not knowing whither he went.” “Abram departed as the LORD had spoken unto him.”

Such are the instances of Divine calls in Scripture, and their characteristic is this; to require instant obedience, and next to call us we know not to what; to call us on in the darkness. Faith alone can obey them.

⁶ Matth. iv. 18.

⁷ Ibid. ix. 9.

⁸ Mark ii. 14.

⁹ Matt. xx. 6, 7.

¹ Luke ix. 59, 60.

² Gen. xii. 1.

But it may be urged, How does this concern us now? We were all called to serve God in infancy, before we could obey or disobey; we found ourselves called when reason began to dawn; we have been called to a state of salvation; we have been living as God's servants and children all through our time of trial, having been brought into it in infancy through Holy Baptism, by the act of our parents. Calling is not a thing future with us, but a thing past.

This is true in a very sufficient sense; and yet it is true also that the passages of Scripture which I have been quoting do apply to us still,—do concern us, and may warn and guide us in many important ways; as a few words will show.

For in truth we are not called once only, but many times; all through our life CHRIST is calling us. HE called us first in Baptism; but afterwards also; whether we obey His voice or not, HE graciously calls us still. If we fall from our Baptism, HE calls us to repent; if we are striving to fulfil our calling, HE calls us on from grace to grace, and from holiness to holiness, while life is given us. Abraham was called from his home, Peter from his nets, Matthew from his office, Elisha from his farm, Nathanael from his retreat; we are all in course of calling, on and on, from one thing to another, having no resting-place, but mounting towards our eternal rest, and obeying one command only to have another put upon us. HE calls us again and again, in order to justify us again and again, and again and again, and more and more, to sanctify and glorify us.

It were well if we understood this; but we are slow to master the great truth, that CHRIST is, as it were, walking among us, and by His hand, or eye, or voice, bidding us follow HIM. We do not understand that His call is a thing which takes place now. We think it took place in the Apostles' days; but we do not believe in it, we do not look out for it in our own case. We have not eyes to see the LORD; far different from the beloved Apostle, who knew CHRIST even when the rest of the disciples knew HIM not. When HE stood on the shore after His resurrection, and bade them cast the net into the sea, "that disciple whom JESUS loved saith unto Peter, It is the LORD³."

³ John xxi. 7.

Now what I mean is this : that they who are living religiously, have from time to time truths they did not know before, or had no need to consider, brought before them forcibly; truths which involve duties, which are in fact precepts, and claim obedience. In this and such-like ways CHRIST calls us now. There is nothing miraculous or extraordinary in His dealings with us. He works through our natural faculties and circumstances of life. Still what happens to us in providence is in all essential respects what His voice was to those whom HE addressed when on earth: whether HE commands by a visible presence, or by a voice, or by our consciences, it matters not, so that we feel it to be a command. If it is a command, it may be obeyed or disobeyed; it may be accepted as Samuel or St. Paul accepted it, or put aside after the manner of the young man who had great possessions.

And these divine calls are commonly, from the nature of the case, sudden now, and as indefinite and obscure in their consequences as in former times. The accidents and events of life are, as is obvious, one special way in which the calls I speak of come to us; and they, as we all know, are in their very nature, and as the word accident implies, sudden and unexpected. A man is going on as usual; he comes home one day, and finds a letter, or a message, or a person, whereby a sudden trial comes on him, which, if met religiously, will be the means of advancing him to a higher state of religious excellence, which at present he as little comprehends as the unspeakable words heard by St. Paul in paradise. By a trial we commonly mean, a something which if encountered well, will confirm a man in his present way; but I am speaking of something more than this; of what will not only confirm him, but raise him into a high state of knowledge and holiness. Many persons will find it very striking on looking back on their past lives, to observe what different notions they entertained at different periods, of what divine truth was, what was the way of pleasing God, and what things were allowable or not, what excellence was, and what happiness. I do not scruple to say, that these differences may be as great as that which may be supposed to have existed between St. Peter's state of mind when quietly fishing on the lake, or Elisha's when driving his oxen, and that new state of mind of each of them when called to be Apostle or Prophet. Elisha and St. Peter indeed were also

called to a new mode of life; that I am not speaking of. I am not speaking of cases when persons change their condition, their place in society, their pursuit, and the like; I am supposing them to remain pretty much the same as before in outward circumstances; but I say that many a man is conscious to himself of having undergone inwardly great changes of view as to what truth is and what happiness. Nor, again, am I speaking of changes so great, that a man reverses his former opinions and conduct. He may be able to see that there is a connexion between the two; that his former has led to his latter; and yet he may feel that after all they differ in kind; that he has got into a new world of thought, and measures things and persons by a different rule. Nothing, indeed, is more wonderful and strange than the different views which different persons take of the same subject. Take any single fact, event, or existing thing which meets us in the world; what various remarks will be made on it by different persons! For instance, consider the different lights in which any single action, of a striking nature, is viewed by different persons; or consider the view of wealth or a wealthy man, taken by this or that class in the community; what different feelings does it excite—envy, or respect, or ridicule, or angry opposition, or indifference, or fear, and compassion; here are states of mind in which different parties may regard it. These are broad differences; others are quite as real, though more subtle. Religion, for instance, may be revered by the soldier, the man of literature, the trader, the statesman, and the theologian; yet how very distinct their modes of reverencing it, and how separate the standard which each sets up in his mind! Well, all these various modes of viewing things cannot one and all be the best mode, even were they all good modes; but this even is not the case. Some are contrary to others; some are bad. But even of those that are on the whole good, some are but in part good, some are imperfect, some have much bad mixed with them; and only one is best. Only one is the truth and the perfect truth; and which that is, none know but those who are in possession of it, if even they. But God knows which it is; and towards that one and only Truth HE is leading us forward. HE is leading forward His redeemed; HE is training His elect, one and all, to the one per-

fect knowledge and obedience of CHRIST; not, however, without their co-operation, but by means of calls which they are to obey, and which if they do not obey, they lose place, and fall behind in their heavenly course. He leads them forward from strength to strength, and from glory to glory, up the steps of the ladder whose top reacheth to heaven. We pass from one state of knowledge to another; we are introduced into a higher region from a lower, by listening to CHRIST's call and obeying it.

Perhaps it may be the loss of some dear friend or relative through which the call comes to us; which shows us the vanity of things below, and prompts us to make God our sole stay. We through grace do so in a way we never did before; and in the course of years when we look back on our life, we find that that sad event has brought us into a new state of faith and judgment, and that we are as though other men from what we were. We thought, before it took place, that we were serving God, and so we were in a measure; but we find that, whatever our present infirmities may be, and however far we be still from the highest state of illumination, then at least we were serving the world under the show and the belief of serving God.

Or again, perhaps something occurs to force us to take a part for God or against Him. The world requires of us some sacrifice which we see we ought not to grant to it. Some tempting offer is made us; or some reproach or discredit threatened us: or we have to determine and avow what is truth and what is error. We are enabled to act as God would have us; and we do so in much fear and perplexity. We do not see our way clearly; we do not see what is to follow from what we have done, and how it bears upon our general conduct and opinions: yet perhaps it has the most important bearings. That little deed, suddenly exacted of us, almost suddenly resolved on and executed, may be as though a gate into the second or third heaven—an entrance into a higher state of holiness, and into a truer view of things than we have hitherto taken.

Or again, we get acquainted with some one whom God employs to bring before us a number of truths which were closed on us before; and we but half understand them, and but half approve

of them ; and yet God seems to speak in them, and Scripture to confirm them. This is a case which not unfrequently occurs, and it involves a call "to follow on to know the LORD⁴."

Or again, we may be in the practice of reading Scripture carefully, and trying to serve God, and its sense may, as if suddenly, break upon us, in a way it never did before. Some thought may suggest itself to us, which is a key to a great deal in Scripture, or which suggests a great many other thoughts. A new light may be thrown on the precepts of our LORD and His Apostles. We may be able to enter into the manner of life of the early Christians, as recorded in Scripture, which before was hidden from us, and into the simple maxims on which Scripture bases it. We may be led to understand that it is very different from the life which men live now. Now knowledge is a call to action : an insight into the way of perfection is a call to perfection.

Once more, it may so happen that we find ourselves, how or why we cannot tell, much more able to obey God in certain respects than heretofore. Our minds are so strangely constituted, it is impossible to say whether it is from the growth of habit suddenly showing itself, or from an unusual gift of divine grace poured into our hearts, but so it is ; let our temptation be to sloth, or irresolution, or worldly anxiety, or pride, or to other more base and miserable sins, we may suddenly find ourselves possessed of a power of self-command which we had not before. Or again, we may have a resolution grow on us to serve God more strictly in His house and in private than heretofore. This is a call to higher things ; let us beware lest we receive the grace of God in vain. Let us beware of lapsing back ; let us avoid temptation. Let us strive by quietness and caution to cherish the feeble flame, and shelter it from the storms of this world. God may be bringing us into a higher world of religious truth ; let us work with HIM.

To conclude. Nothing is more certain in matter of fact, than that some men do feel themselves called to high duties and works, to which others are not called. Why this is we do not know ;

⁴ Hosea vi. 3.

whether it be that those who are not called, forfeit the call from having failed in former trials, or have been called and have not followed; or that though God gives baptismal grace to all, yet He really does call some men by His free grace to higher things than others; but so it is; this man sees sights which that man does not see, has a larger faith, a more ardent love, and a more spiritual understanding. No one has any leave to take another's lower standard of holiness for his own. It is nothing to us what others are. If God calls us to greater renunciation of the world, and exacts a sacrifice of our hopes and fears, this is our gain, this is a mark of His love for us, this is a thing to be rejoiced in. Such thoughts, when properly entertained, have no tendency to puff us up; for if the prospect is noble, yet the risk is more fearful. While we pursue high excellence, we walk among precipices, and a fall is easy. Hence the Apostle says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you⁵." Again, the more men aim at high things, the more sensitive perception they have of their own shortcomings; and this again is adapted to humble them especially. We need not fear spiritual pride then, in following CHRIST's call, if we follow it as men in earnest. Earnestness has no time to compare itself with the state of other men; earnestness has too vivid a feeling of its own infirmities to be elated at itself. Earnestness is simply set on doing God's will. It simply says, "Speak, LORD, for Thy servant heareth." "LORD, what wilt Thou have me to do?" O that we had more of this spirit! O that we could take that simple view of things, as to feel that the one thing which lies before us is to please God! What gain is it to please the world, to please the great, nay, even to please those whom we love, compared with this? What gain is it to be applauded, admired, courted, followed, compared with this one aim, of not being disobedient to a heavenly vision? What can this world offer comparable with that insight into spiritual things, that keen faith, that heavenly peace, that high sanctity, that everlasting righteousness, that hope of glory, which they have who in sincerity love and follow our LORD JESUS CHRIST?

⁵ Phil. ii. 12, 13.

Let us beg and pray HIM day by day to reveal HIMSELF to our souls more fully; to quicken our senses; to give us sight and hearing, taste and touch of the world to come; so to work within us that we may sincerely say, "THOU shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after that receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but THEE? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of THEE: my flesh and my heart faileth; but GOD is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

SERMON CXLIX.

THE TRIAL OF SAUL.

I SAMUEL xiii. 9.

“And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings.
And he offered the burnt offering.”

WE are all on our trial. Every one who lives is on his trial, whether he will serve God or not. And we read in Scripture of many instances of the trials, upon which ALMIGHTY God puts us His creatures. In the beginning, Adam, when he was first created, was put upon his trial. He was placed in a beautiful garden, he had everything given him for his pleasure and comfort ; he was created innocent and upright, and he had the great gift of the HOLY SPIRIT given him to enable him to please God, and to attain to heaven. One thing alone he was forbidden—to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ; this was his trial. If he did not eat of the fruit, he was to live ; if he did, he was to die. Alas, he did eat of the fruit, and he did die. He was tried and found wanting ; he fell ; such was the end of *his* trial.

Many other trials, besides Adam's, are recorded in Scripture, and that for our warning and instruction ; that we may be reminded that we too are on trial, that we may be encouraged by the examples of those who have stood their trial well and not fallen, and may be sobered and put on our guard by the instances of others who have fallen under their trial. Of these latter cases, Saul is one. Saul, of whom we have been reading in the course

of this service¹, is an instance of a man whom God blessed and proved, as Adam before him, whom HE put on his trial, and who, like Adam, was found wanting.

Now the history, I say, of this melancholy and awful fall is contained in the chapter which we have been reading, and from which the text is taken; and I will now attempt to explain to you its circumstances.

Saul was not born a king, or the son of a great family; he was a man of humble birth and circumstances, and he was raised by God's free grace to be the ruler and king of His people Israel. Samuel, God's prophet, revealed this to him, anointed him with oil, and after he became king, instructed him in his duty; and, moreover, put him on his trial. Now his trial was this. God's people, the Israelites, over whom Saul was appointed to reign, had been very much oppressed and harassed by their enemies round about; heathen nations, who hated the true God and His worship, rose and fought against them; and of these nations the Philistines were the chief at that time. They overran the country, and brought the Israelites into captivity. They tyrannized over them, and to make sure that they should never be free, they even took away from them the means of forging weapons to fight with. "There was no smith found through all the land of Israel," says the chapter, "for the Philistines said, lest the Hebrews (*i. e.* the Israelites) make them swords or spears. But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his ax, and his mattock." Saul was raised up to throw off this heavy yoke, and to destroy the cruel oppressors of his people. He "chose him three thousand men, and with a third of them Jonathan, his son, smote the garrison of the Philistines which was in Geba."

Upon this, as was naturally to be supposed, these powerful enemies the Philistines became highly incensed, and assembled together a great army to chastise the insurgent people, their subjects as they would call them, who were making head against them. They had "thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea-shore in multitude." On the other hand, Saul on his part, "blew the trumpet through all the land," and summoned all Israelites

¹ Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

to him. They came together to him at Gilgal. And the Philistines came with their great host, and pitched over against him. Thus the two armies remained in sight of each other, and then it was that Saul's trial began.

Before Saul went to battle, it was necessary to offer a burnt sacrifice to the LORD, and to beg of HIM a blessing on the arms of Israel. He could have no hope of victory, unless this act of religious worship was performed. Now priests only and prophets were GOD's ministers, and they alone could offer sacrifice. Kings could not, unless they were specially commanded to do so by ALMIGHTY GOD. Saul had no leave to offer sacrifice; yet a sacrifice must be offered before he could fight; what must he do? He must wait for Samuel, who had said that he would come to him for that purpose. "Thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal," says Samuel to him, "and behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt-offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings; seven days shalt thou tarry till I come unto thee, and show thee what thou shalt do²." Saul, you see, was told to wait seven days till Samuel came; but meanwhile this great trial came upon him. The people he had gathered together to fight against the Philistines were far inferior to them in military qualities. They were not even soldiers; they were country people brought together, rising against a powerful enemy, who was used to rule, as they were used to subjection. And, as I have already observed, they had no regular arms: "it came to pass," says Scripture, "in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan." No wonder, under these circumstances, that many did not come to Saul's army at all; many hid themselves; many fled out of the country; and of those who joined him, all were in a state of alarm, and numbers began to desert. "When the men of Israel," says Scripture, "saw that they were in a strait, then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead; as for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. And he tarried seven days, according

² 1 Samuel x. 8.

to the set time that Samuel had appointed ; but Samuel came not to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him."

What a great trial this must have been ! Here was a king who had been made king for the express purpose of destroying the Philistines ; he is in presence of his powerful enemy ; he is anxious to fulfil his commission ; he fears to fail ; his reputation is at stake ; he has at best a most difficult task, as his soldiers are very bad ones, and are all afraid of the enemy. His only chance, humanly speaking, is to strike a blow ; if he delays, he can expect nothing but total defeat ; the longer he delays, the more frightened his men will become. Yet he is told to wait seven days ; seven long days must he wait ; he does wait them ; and to his great mortification and despair, his soldiers begin to desert ; day after day more and more leave him : what will be the end of this ? Yet does he govern his feelings so far, as to wait all through the seven days. So far he acquits himself well in the trial ; he was told simply to wait seven days, and in spite of the risk, he does wait. Though he sees his army crumbling away, and the enemy ready to attack him, he obeys God ; he obeys His prophet ; he does nothing ; he looks out for Samuel's coming.

At length the seven days are gone and over ; those weary wearing days, that long trial of a week, through every hour of which he was tempted to advance against the enemy, yet every hour had to restrain his fierce and impatient spirit. Now then is the time for Samuel to come ; he said he would come at the end of seven days, and the days are ended. Now at length is the time for Saul to be relieved. For seven days the Philistines, for some cause or other, have not attacked him ; a wonderful chance it is ; he may breathe freely ; every hour, every minute he expects to hear that Samuel has joined the camp. But now, when his trial seemed over, behold a second trial—Samuel comes not. The prophet of God said he would come ; the prophet of God does not come as he said.

Why Samuel did not come, we are not informed ; except that we see it was God's will to try Saul still further ; however, he did not come, and now let us observe what was Saul's conduct.

Hitherto he had acquitted himself well ; he had obeyed to the letter the command of God by His prophet. He had waited in

faith though in fear; he feared the Philistines, but had faith in God. O that he had continued in his faith! but his faith gave way, when his trial was prolonged.

When Samuel did not come, there was no one of course to offer sacrifice; what was to be done? Saul ought to have waited still longer, till Samuel did come. He had had faith in God hitherto, he should have had faith still. He had hitherto trusted that God would save him from the enemy, though his army was scattered, in God's own way. God fights not with sword and bow; HE can give victory to whom HE will, and when HE will, "with His own right hand, and His holy arm," can HE accomplish His purposes. Saul was God's servant, and therefore he might securely trust in God. He had trusted for seven days; he might go on trusting for eight, nine, or ten. And let it be observed, that this fresh trial was hardly a greater trial than before, for this reason—that his faith hitherto had met with its reward. Though the Philistines were in his front, and his own men were deserting, yet, strange to say, the Philistines had not attacked him. Thus he had had proof that God could defend him from them. HE who had kept him so safely for seven days, why should HE not also on the eighth? however, he did not feel this, and so he took a very rash and fatal step.

That step was as follows: since Samuel had not come, he determined to offer the burnt sacrifice instead of him; he determined to do what he could not do without a great sin; viz. intrude into a sacred office to which he was not called; nay, to do what he really could not do at all; for he might call it a sacrifice, but it would not be really such, unless a priest or prophet offered it. You know how great a crime it is for persons now to become teachers and preachers, or to baptize or administer the LORD'S Supper without authority; this was Saul's crime, he determined on sacrificing, without being an appointed minister of God. This is a crime often denounced in Scripture, as in the case of Korah, and Jeroboam, and Uzziah. Korah was swallowed up by the earth on account of it; Jeroboam had his hand withered, and was punished in his family; and Uzziah was smitten with leprosy. Yet this was Saul's sin. "And Saul said," in the words of the text, "Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings; and he offered the burnt offering." Now observe what happened

immediately afterwards. "And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came, and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him." You see, if he had waited but one hour more, he would have been saved this sin; in other words, he would have succeeded in his trial instead of failing. But he failed, and the consequence was, he lost God's favour, and forfeited his kingdom.

Let us observe what Samuel said to him, and what he answered; "And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together to Michmash; therefore, said I, the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself, therefore, and offered a burnt offering." Such was his excuse; and now hear what Samuel thought of it: "And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which HE commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought HIM a man after His own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee." Such was the end of Saul's trial: he fell; he was not obedient; and in consequence he forfeited God's favour.

How much is there in this melancholy history which applies to us, my brethren, at this day, though it happened some thousand years ago! Man is the same in every age, and GOD ALMIGHTY is the same; and thus what happened to Saul, king of Israel, is, alas, daily fulfilled in us, to our great shame. We all, as Saul, have been raised by God to great honour and glory; not, indeed, glory of this world, but unseen spiritual glory. We were born in sin, and the children of wrath; and HE has caused us to be baptized with water and the Spirit in the Name of FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST: and as Saul, by being anointed with oil by Samuel was made king of Israel, so we, by baptism, are made kings, not kings of this world, but kings and princes in the heavenly kingdom of CHRIST. HE is our head, and we are

His brethren ; HE has sat down on His throne on high, and has been crowned by His Eternal FATHER as LORD and CHRIST ; and we, too, by being made His brethren, partake His unseen, His heavenly glory. Though we be poor in this world, yet, when we were baptized, we, like Saul, were made strong in the LORD, powerful princes, with angels to wait upon us, and with a place on Christ's throne in prospect. Hence, I say, we are, like Saul, favoured by God's free grace ; and in consequence we are put on our trial like Saul—we are all tried in one way or another ; and now consider how many there are who fall like Saul.

1. How many are there who, when in distress of any kind, in want of means, or of necessities, forget, like Saul, that their distress, whatever it is, comes from GOD ; that GOD brings it on them, and that GOD will remove it in His own way, if they trust in HIM : but who, instead of waiting for His time, take their own way, their own bad way, and impatiently hasten the time, and thus bring on themselves judgment ! Sometimes, telling an untruth will bring them out of their difficulties, and they are tempted to do so. They make light of the sin ; they say they cannot help themselves, that they are forced to it, as Saul said to Samuel ; they make excuses to quiet their conscience ; and instead of bearing the trial well, enduring their poverty, or whatever the trouble may be, they do not shrink from a deliberate lie, which GOD hears. Or, again, in like circumstances, they are tempted to steal ; and they argue that they are in greater want than the party they injure, or that he will never miss what they take ; and that they would not take it, were not their distress so great. Thus they act like Saul, and thus they tempt GOD in turn to deprive them of their heavenly inheritance. Or further, perhaps, they both steal and lie also ; first steal, and then lie in order to hide their theft.

2. Again, how many are there who, when in unpleasant situations, are tempted to do what is wrong in order to get out of them, instead of patiently waiting GOD's time ! They have, perhaps, unkind parents, and they are so uncomfortable at home, that they take the first opportunity which presents itself of getting away. They marry irreligious persons, not asking themselves the question whether they are irreligious, merely from impatience to get out of their present discomfort ; “ Any thing but

this," they say. What is this but to act like Saul? *he* had very little peace or quiet all the time he remained in presence of the enemy, with his own people falling away from him; and he, too, took an unlawful means to get out of his difficulty. And so, again, when persons have harsh masters and employers, or troublesome neighbours, or are engaged in employments which they do not like, they often forget that all this is from God's providence, that to *HIM* they must look up, that *HE* who imposed it can take it away, can take it away in His good time, and without their sin. But they, like Saul, are impatient, and will not wait. And, again, are not some of us tempted to be impatient at the religious disadvantages we lie under; and instead of waiting for God's time, and God's prophet, take the matter into our own hand, leave the place where God has put us, and join some other communion, in order (as we hope) to have clearer light and fuller privileges?

3. Again, how many are there who, though their hearts are not right before God, yet have some sort of religiousness, and by it deceive themselves into an idea that they are religious! Observe, Saul in his way was a religious man; I say, in *his* way, but not in God's way; yet His very disobedience *he* might consider an act of religion. He offered sacrifice *rather* than go to battle without a sacrifice. An openly irreligious man would have drawn up his army and fallen upon the Philistines without any religious service at all. Saul did not do this; no, he wished that an act of worship and prayer should precede the battle; he desired to have God's blessing upon him; and perversely, while he felt that blessing to be necessary, he did not feel that the only way of gaining it was seeking it *in the way* which God had appointed; that, whereas God had not made him His minister, he could not possibly offer the burnt offering acceptably. Thus he deceived himself; and thus many men deceive themselves now; not casting off religion altogether, but choosing their religion for themselves, as Saul did, and fancying they can be religious without being obedient.

4. Again, how many are there, who bear half the trial God puts on them, but not the whole of it; who go on well for a time, and then fall away! Saul bore on for seven days, and

fainted not ; on the eighth day his faith failed him. O may we persevere to the end ! Many fall away. Let us watch and pray. Let us not get secure. Let us not think it enough to have got through one temptation well ; through our whole life we are on trial. When one temptation is over, another comes ; and, perhaps, our having got through one well, will be the occasion of our falling under the next, if we be not on our guard ; because it may make us secure and confident, as if we had already conquered, and were safe.

5. Once more, how many are there, who, in a narrow grudging cold-hearted way, go by the letter of God's commandments, while they neglect the spirit ! Instead of considering what CHRIST wishes them to do, they take His words one by one, and will only accept them in their bare necessary meaning. They do not throw their hearts upon Scripture, and try to consider it as the voice of a Living and Kind LORD and MASTER speaking to them, but they take it to mean as little as it can. They are wanting in love. Saul was told to wait seven days—he *did* wait seven days ; and then he thought he might do what he chose. He, in effect, said to Samuel, " I have done just what you told me." Yes, he fulfilled Samuel's directions literally and rigidly, but not in the spirit of love. Had he loved the Word of God, he would not have been so precise and exact in his reckoning, but would have waited still longer. And, in like manner, persons now-a-days, imitating him, too often say, when taxed with any offence, " Why is it wrong ? Where is it so said in Scripture ? Show us the text : " all which only shows that they obey carnally, in the letter and not in the spirit.

How will all excuses, which sinners now make to blind and deaden their consciences, fail them in the Last Day ! Saul had his excuses for disobedience. He did not confess he was wrong, but he argued ; but Samuel with a word reproved, and convicted, and silenced, and sentenced him. And so in the Day of Judgment all our actions will be tried as by fire. The All knowing, All holy JUDGE, our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, will sit on His throne, and with the breath of His mouth HE will scatter away all idle excuses on which men now depend ; and the secrets of men's hearts will be revealed. Then shall be seen who it is

that serveth God, and who serveth HIM not; who serve HIM with the lips, who with the heart; who are hypocrites, and who are true.

God give us grace to be in the number of those whose faith and whose love is without hypocrisy or pretence; who obey out of a pure heart and a good conscience; who sincerely wish to know God's will; and who do it as far as they know it!

SERMON CL.

THE CALL OF DAVID.

1 SAMUEL xvii. 50.

“So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone.”

THESE words, which are taken from the chapter which you heard read just now in the course of the Service¹, declare the victory which David, the man after God's own heart, gained over Goliath, who came out of the army of the Philistines to defy the Living God; and they declare the manner of his gaining it. He gained it with a sling and with a stone; that is, by means, which to man might seem weak and hopeless, but which God Almighty blessed and prospered. Let no one think the history of David's calling, and his victory over Goliath, of little importance to himself; it is indeed interesting to read for its own sake; it raises the mind of the Christian to God, shows us His power, and reminds us of the wonderful deliverances with which HE visits His Church in every age; but besides all this, this history is useful to us Christians, as setting before us our own calling, and our conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil; as such I shall now briefly consider it.

David, the son of a man in humble life, and the youngest of his brethren, was chosen by ALMIGHTY GOD to be His special servant, —to be a prophet, a king, a psalmist; he was anointed by Samuel

¹ Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

to be all this; and in due time he was brought forward by ALMIGHTY GOD, and as a first act of might, slew the heathen giant Goliath, as described in the text. Now let us apply all this to ourselves.

1. David was the son of a Bethlehemite, one among the families of Israel, with nothing apparently to recommend him to God; the youngest of his brethren, and despised by them. He was sent to feed the sheep; and his father, though doubtless he loved him dearly, yet seems to have thought little of him. For when Samuel came to Jesse at God's command, in order to choose one of his sons from the rest as God might direct him, Jesse did not bring David before him, though he did bring all his other children. Thus David seemed born to live and die among his sheep. His brothers were allowed to engage in occupations which the world thinks higher and more noble. Three of them served as soldiers in the king's army, and in consequence looked down upon David; on his asking about Goliath, one of them said to him in contempt, "With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" Yet God took him from the sheepfolds to make him His servant and His friend. Now this is fulfilled in the case of all Christians. They are by nature poor, and mean, and nothing worth; but God chooses them, and brings them near unto Himself. He looks not at outward things; He chooses and decrees according to His will, and why He chooses these men, and passes over those, we know not. In this country many are chosen, many are not; and why some are chosen, others not, we cannot tell. Some men are born within the bounds of holy Church, and are baptized with her baptism; others are not even baptized at all. Some are born of bad parents, irreligious parents, and have no education, or a bad one. We, on the contrary, my brethren, are born in the Church; we have been baptized by the Church's ministers; and why this is our blessedness, and not the blessedness of others, we cannot tell. Here we differ from David. He was chosen above his brethren, because he was better than they. It is expressly said, that when Samuel was going to choose one of his elder brethren, God said to him, "I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the

heart²;" implying, that David's heart was in a better state than his brother's, whom Samuel would have chosen. But this is not our case; we are in nowise better by nature than they whom God does not choose. You will find good and worthy men, benevolent, charitable, upright men, among those who have never been baptized. God hath chosen all of us to salvation, not for our righteousness, but for His great mercies. HE has brought us to worship HIM in sacred places where His saints have worshipped for many hundred years. HE has given us the aid of His ministers, and His Sacraments, and His Holy Scriptures, and the Ancient Creed. To others, Scripture is a sealed book, though they hold it in their hands; but to us it is in good measure an open book, through God's mercy, if we but use our advantages, if we have but spiritual eyes and ears, to read and hear it faithfully. To others, the Sacraments and other rites are but dead ordinances, carnal ceremonies, which profit not, like those of the Jewish Law, outward forms, beggarly elements, as they themselves often confess; but to us, if we have faith, they are full of grace and power. Thus all we have been chosen by God's grace unto salvation, in a special way, in which many others around us have not been chosen, as God passed over David's seven brethren, and chose him.

2. Observe, too, God chose him, whose occupation was that of a shepherd; for HE chooses not the great men of the world. HE passes by the rich and noble; HE chooses "the poor, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which HE hath promised to them that love HIM³," as St. James says. David was a shepherd. The Angel appeared to the shepherds as they kept watch over their sheep at night. The most solitary, the most unlearned, God hears, God looks upon, God visits, God blesses, God brings to glory, if he is but "rich in faith." Many of you are not great in this world, my brethren, many of you are poor; but the greatest king upon earth, even Solomon in all his glory, might well exchange places with you, if you are God's children; for then you are greater than the greatest of kings. Our SAVIOUR said, that even the lilies of the field were more gloriously arrayed than

² 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

³ James ii. 5.

Solomon ; ~~for the lily is a living thing, the work of God ; and all the glories of a king, his purple robe, and his jewelled crown, all this is but the dead work of man ;~~ and the lowest and humblest work of God is far better, and more glorious than the highest work of man. But if this be true, even of God's lower works, what shall be said of His higher ? If even the lilies of the field, which are cut down and cast into the oven, are more glorious than this world's greatest glory, what shall be said of God's nobler works in the soul of man ? what shall be said of the dispensation of the Spirit which "exceeds in glory ?" of that new creation of the soul, whereby HE makes us His children, who by birth were children of Adam, and slaves of the devil, gives us a new and heavenly nature, implants His HOLY SPIRIT within us, and washes away all our sins ? This is the portion of the Christian, high or low ; and all glories of this world fade away before it ; king and subject, man of war and keeper of sheep, are all on a level in the kingdom of CHRIST ; for they one and all receive those far exceeding and eternal blessings, which make this world's distinctions, though they remain distinctions just as before, yet so little, so unimportant, in comparison of the "glory that excelleth," that it is not worth while thinking about them. One person is a king and rules, another is a subject and obeys ; but if both are Christians, both have in common a gift so great, that in the sight of it, the difference between ruling and obeying is as nothing. All Christians are kings in God's sight ; they are kings in His unseen kingdom, in His spiritual world, in the Communion of Saints. They seem like other men, but they have crowns on their heads, and glorious robes around them, and Angels to wait on them, though our bodily eyes see it not. Such are all Christians, high and low ; all Christians who remain in that state in which Holy Baptism placed them. Baptism placed you in this blessed state. God did not wait till you should do some good thing before HE blessed you. No ! HE knew you could do no good thing of yourselves. So HE came to you first ; HE loved you before you loved HIM ; HE gave you a work which HE first made you able to do. He placed you in a new and heavenly state, in which, while you remain, you are safe. HE said not to you, "Obey ME, and I will give you a kingdom ;" but "Lo I give you a kingdom freely and first of all ; now obey

ME henceforth, for you can, and you shall remain in it;" not "Obey ME, and I will then give you the HOLY SPIRIT as a reward;" but "I give you that great gift in order that you may obey ME." HE first gives, and then commands; HE tells us to obey HIM, not to gain His favour, but in order not to lose it. We are by nature diseased and helpless. We cannot please HIM; we cannot move hand or foot; HE says not to us, "Get well first, and I will receive you;" but HE begins a cure in us, and receives us, and then says, "Take care not to go back; take care of yourselves; beware of a relapse; keep out of danger." Such then is your state, my brethren, unless you have fallen from CHRIST. If you are living in His faith and fear, you are kings—kings in God's unseen and spiritual kingdom; and that, though like David, you are but keeping sheep, or driving cattle, or, again, working with your hands, or serving in a family, or at any other lowly labour. GOD seeth not as man seeth, HE hath chosen you.

3. Next, observe GOD chose David by means of the Prophet Samuel. He did not think it enough to choose him silently, but HE called him by a voice. And, in like manner, when GOD calls us, HE does so openly. HE sent His minister, the Prophet Samuel, to David; and HE sends His ministers to us. He said to Samuel, "Fill thy horn with oil, and go, and I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have provided ME a king among his sons." GOD was looking out for a king, and sent Samuel to David. And so, in like manner, GOD is looking out now for kings to fill thrones in His SON's eternal kingdom, and to sit at His right hand and His left; and HE sends His ministers to those whom HE hath from eternity chosen. HE does not say to them, "Fill thy horn with oil," but "Fill thy font with water;" for as HE chose David by pouring oil upon his head, so does HE choose us by baptism. So far, then, GOD chooses now as HE did then, by an outward sign. Samuel was told to do then, what CHRIST's ministers are told to do now. The one chose David by means of oil, and the other choose Christians by means of water. In this, however, there is a difference. Samuel could but choose one. He was not allowed to choose more than one; him, namely, whom GOD pointed out: but now CHRIST's ministers (blessed be His name!) may choose and baptize all whom they meet with; there is no restriction, no narrowness; they

need not wait to be told whom to choose. CHRIST says, "Compel them to come in." Again, the Prophet says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Now every one by nature thirsteth; every soul born into the world is in a spiritual sickness, in a wasting fever of mind; he has no rest, no ease, no peace, no true happiness. Till he is made partaker of CHRIST he is hopeless and miserable. CHRIST then, in His mercy, having died for all, gives His ministers leave to apply His saving death to all whom they can find. Not one or two, but thousands upon thousands are gifted with His high blessings. "Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed" David "in the midst of his brethren." And so CHRIST's ministers take water, and baptize; yet not merely one out of a family, but all; for God's mercies are poured as wide as the sun's light in the heavens, they enlighten all they fall upon.

4. When Samuel had anointed David, observe what followed. "Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the SPIRIT of the LORD came upon David from that day forward." And so, also, when CHRIST's ministers baptize, the SPIRIT of the LORD comes upon the child baptized henceforth; nay, dwells in him, for the Christian's gift is far greater even than David's. God's SPIRIT did but come upon David, and visit him from time to time; but HE vouchsafes to dwell within the Christian, so as to make his heart and body His temple. Now what was there in the oil, which Samuel used, to produce so great an effect? nothing at all. Oil has no power in itself; but God gave it a power. In like manner the Prophet Elisha told Naaman the Syrian to bathe in Jordan, and so he was healed of his leprosy. Naaman said, What is Jordan more than other rivers? how can Jordan heal? It could not heal, except that God's power made it heal. Did not our SAVIOUR feed five thousand persons with a few loaves and fishes? how could that be? by His power. How could water become wine? by His power. And so now, that same Divine power, which made water wine, multiplied the bread, gave water power to heal an incurable disease, and made oil the means of gifting David with the HOLY SPIRIT, that power now also makes the water of Baptism a means of grace and glory. The water is like other water; we see no difference by the eye; we use it, we throw it

away ; but God is with it. God is with it, as with the oil which Samuel brought. Water is something more than water in its effects in the hand of a Minister, with the words of grace ; it does, what by nature it cannot do ; it is heavenly water, not earthly.

5. Further, I would have you observe this. Though David received the gift of God's HOLY SPIRIT, yet nothing came of it all at once. He still seemed like any other man. He went back to the sheep. Then Saul sent for him to play to him on the harp ; and then he went back to the sheep again. Except that he had strength given him to kill a lion and a bear which came against his flock, he did no great thing. The SPIRIT of the LORD had come upon him, yet it did not at once make him a prophet or a king. All was to come in good time, not at once. So it is with Christian Baptism. Nothing shows, for some time, that the SPIRIT of God is come into, and dwells in the child baptized ; it looks like any other child, it is pained, it frets, is weak, is wayward, like any other child ; for "the LORD seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh at the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." And "HE who seeth the heart," seeth in the child the presence of the SPIRIT, "the mind of the SPIRIT" "which maketh intercession for the Saints." God the HOLY GHOST leads on the heirs of grace marvellously. You recollect when our SAVIOUR was baptized, "immediately the SPIRIT of GOD led HIM into the wilderness." What happened one way in our SAVIOUR's course, happens in ours also. Sooner or later that work of God is manifested, which was at first secret. David went up to see his brothers, who were in the battle ; he had no idea that he was going to fight the giant Goliath ; and so it is now, children are baptized before they know what is to happen to them. They sport and play as if there was no sorrow in the world, and no high destinies on themselves ; they are heirs of the kingdom without knowing it ; but God is with those whom HE has chosen, and in His own time and way HE fashions His Saints for His everlasting kingdom : in His own perfect and adorable counsels HE brings these forward to fight with Goliath.

6. Lastly, then, let us inquire who is our Goliath ? who is it we have to contend with ? The answer is plain ; the devil is our Goliath : we have to fight Satan, who is far more fearful and

powerful than ten thousand giants, and who would to a certainty destroy us, were not God with us; but, praised be His Name, He is with us. "Greater is He that is with us, than he that is in the world." David was first anointed with God's HOLY SPIRIT, and then, after a while, brought forward to fight Goliath. We too are first baptized, and then brought forward to fight the devil. We are not brought to fight him at once; for some years we are almost without a fight, when we are infants. By degrees our work comes upon us; as children we have to fight with him a little; as time goes on, the fight opens; and at length we have our great enemy marching against us with sword and spear, as Goliath came against David. And when this war has once begun, it lasts through life.

What then ought you to do, my brethren, when thus assailed? How must you behave when the devil comes against you? he has many ways of attack; sometimes he comes openly, sometimes craftily, sometimes he tempts you, sometimes he frightens you; but whether he comes in a pleasing or a frightful form, be sure, if you saw him himself with your eyes, he would always be hateful, monstrous, and abominable. Therefore he keeps himself out of sight. But be sure he is all this; and, as believing it, take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Quit you like men, be strong. Be like David, very courageous to do God's will. Think what would have happened had David played the coward, and refused to obey God's inward voice stirring him up to fight Goliath. He would have lost his calling, he would have been tried, and have failed. The Prophet's oil would have profited him nothing, or rather would have increased his condemnation. The SPIRIT of God would have departed from him as He departed from Saul, who also had been anointed. So, also, our privileges will but increase our future punishment, unless we use them. *He* is truly and really born of God in whom the Divine seed takes root; others are regenerated to their condemnation. Despise not the gift that is in you: despise not the blessing which by God's free grace you have, and others have not. There is nothing to boast in, that you are God's people; rather the thought is an anxious one: you have much more to answer for.

When, then, Satan comes against you, recollect you are already dedicated, made over, to GOD; you are GOD's property, you have no part with Satan and his works, you are servants to another, you are espoused to CHRIST. When Satan comes against you, fear not, waver not; but pray to GOD, and HE will help you. Say to Satan with David, "Thou comest against me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of Hosts." Thou comest to me with temptation; thou wouldest allure me with the pleasures of sin for a season; thou wouldest kill me, nay, thou wouldest make me kill myself with sinful thoughts, words, and deeds; thou wouldest make me a self-murderer, tempting me by evil companions, and light conversation, and pleasant sights, and strong stirrings of heart; thou wouldest make me profane the LORD's Day by riot; thou wouldest keep me from Church; thou wouldest make my thoughts rove when they should not; thou wouldest tempt me to drink, and to curse, and to swear, and to jest, and to lie, and to steal: but I know thee; thou art Satan, and I come unto thee in the name of the Living GOD, in the Name of JESUS CHRIST my SAVIOUR. That is a powerful name, which can put to flight many foes: JESUS is a name at which devils tremble. To speak it, is to scare away many a bad thought. I come against thee in His All powerful, All conquering Name. David came on with a staff; my staff is the Cross—the Holy Cross on which CHRIST suffered, in which I glory, which is my salvation. David chose five smooth stones out of the brook, and with them he smote the giant. We, too, have armour, not of this world, but of GOD; weapons which the world despises, but which are powerful in GOD. David took not sword, spear, or shield; but he slew Goliath with a sling and a stone. Our weapons are as simple, as powerful. The LORD's Prayer is one such weapon; when we are tempted to sin, let us turn away, kneel down seriously and solemnly, and say to GOD that prayer which the LORD taught us. The Creed is another weapon, equally powerful, through GOD's grace, equally simple, equally contemptible in the eyes of the world. One or two holy texts, such as our SAVIOUR used when HE was tempted by the devil, is another kind of weapon. The Sacrament of the LORD's

Supper is another such, and greater; holy, mysterious, life-giving, and equally simple. What is so simple as a little bread and a little wine? but, in the hands of the SPIRIT of GOD, it is the power of GOD unto salvation. GOD grant us grace to use the arms which HE gives us; not to neglect them, not to take arms of our own; GOD grant us to use His arms, and to conquer!

S E R M O N C L I .

CURIOSITY A TEMPTATION TO SIN.

PROVERBS iv. 14, 15.

“ Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.
Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.”

ONE chief cause of the wickedness which is every where seen in the world, and in which, alas ! each of us has more or less his share, is our curiosity to have some fellowship with darkness, some experience of sin, to know what the pleasures of sin are like. I believe it is even thought unmanly by many persons, (though they may not like to say so in plain words,) unmanly, and a thing to be ashamed of, to have no knowledge of sin by experience, as if it argued a strange seclusion from the world, a childish ignorance of life, a simpleness and narrowness of mind, and a superstitious, slavish fear. Not to know sin by experience brings upon a man the laughter and jests of his companions : nor is it wonderful this should be the case in the descendants of that guilty pair to whom Satan in the beginning held out admittance into a strange world of knowledge and enjoyment, as the reward of disobedience to God's commandment. “ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat¹.” A discontent with the abundance of blessings which were given, because something was withheld,

¹ Gen. iii. 6.

was the sin of our first parents: in like manner, a wanton roving after things forbidden, a curiosity to know what it was to be, as the heathen, was one chief source of the idolatries of the Jews; and we at this day inherit with them a like nature from Adam.

I say, curiosity strangely moves us to disobedience, in order that we may have experience of the pleasures of disobedience. Thus we "rejoice in our youth, and let our heart cheer us in the days of our youth, and walk in the ways of our heart, and in the sight of our eyes²." And we thus intrude into things forbidden, in various ways; in reading what we should not read, in hearing what we should not hear, in seeing what we should not see, in going into company whither we should not go, in presumptuous reasonings and arguings when we should have faith, in acting as if we were our own masters where we should obey. We indulge our reason, we indulge our passions, we indulge our ambition, our vanity, our love of power; we throw ourselves into the society of bad, worldly, or careless men; and all the while we think that, after having acquired this miserable knowledge of good and evil, we can return to our duty, and continue where we left off; merely going aside a moment to shake ourselves, as Samson did, and with an ignorance like his, that our true heavenly strength is departed from us.

Now this delusion arises from Satan's craft, the father of lies, who knows well that if he can get us once to sin, he can easily make us sin twice and thrice, till at length we are taken captive at his will³. He sees that curiosity is man's great and first snare, as it was in paradise; and he knows if he can but force a way into his heart by this chief and exciting temptation, those temptations of other kinds, which follow in life, will easily prevail over us; and, on the other hand, that if we resist the beginnings of sin, there is every prospect through God's grace that we shall continue in a religious way. His plan of action then lies plain before him—to tempt us violently, while the world is new to us, and our hopes and feelings are eager and restless. Hence is seen the divine wisdom, as well as the merciful consideration of the

² Eccles. xi. 9.

³ 2 Tim. ii. 26.

advice contained in so many parts of Scripture, as in the text, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not into the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

Let us then now for a few moments give our minds to the consideration of this plain truth, which we have heard so often that for that very reason we are not unlikely to forget it; that the great thing in religion is to set off well; to resist the beginnings of sin, to flee temptation, to avoid the company of the wicked. "Enter not into the path of the wicked. . . . avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, pass away."

1. And for this reason, first of all, because it is hardly possible to delay our flight, without rendering flight impossible. When I say, resist the beginnings of evil, I do not mean the first act merely, but the rising thought of evil. Whatever the temptation may be, there may be no time to wait and gaze, without being caught. Woe to us if Satan (so to say) sees us first; for, as in the case of some beast of prey, for him to see us is to master us. Directly we are made aware of the temptation, we shall, if we are wise, turn our backs upon it, without waiting to think and reason about it; we shall engage our mind in other thoughts. There are temptations when this advice is especially necessary; but under all it is highly seasonable.

2. For consider, in the next place, what must in all cases be the consequence of allowing evil thoughts to be present to us, though we do not actually admit them into our hearts. This namely; we shall make ourselves familiar with them. Now our great security against sin lies in being shocked at it. Eve gazed and reflected, when she should have fled. It is sometimes said, "Second thoughts are best:" this is true in many cases; but there are times when it is very false, and when, on the contrary, first thoughts are best. For sin is like the serpent, which seduced our first parents. We know that some serpents have the power of what is called fascinating. Their eye has the power of subduing, nay, in a strange way, of alluring their victim; who is reduced to utter helplessness, cannot flee away, nay, rather is obliged to approach, and (as it were) deliver himself up to them; till in their own time they seize and devour him. What a dread-

ful figure this is of the power of sin and the devil over our hearts ! At first our conscience tells us, in a plain straightforward way, what is right and what is wrong ; but when we trifle with this warning, our reason becomes perverted, and comes in aid of our wishes, and deceives us to our ruin. Then we begin to find, that there are arguments available in behalf of bad deeds, and we listen to these till we come to think them true ; and then, if perchance better thoughts return, and we make some feeble effort to get at the truth really and sincerely, we find our minds by that time so bewildered, that we do not know right from wrong.

Thus, for instance, every one is shocked at cursing and swearing when he first hears it ; and at first he cannot help even showing that he is shocked ; that is, he looks grave and down-cast, and feels uncomfortable. But when he has once got accustomed to such profane talking, and been laughed out of his strictness, and has begun to think it manly, and has been persuaded to join in it, then he soon learns to defend it. He says he means no harm by it ; that it does no one any harm ; that it is only so many words, and that every body uses them. Here is an instance in which disobedience to what we know to be right makes us blind.

Again, this same confusion frequently happens in the case of temptations from the world. We fear worldly loss or discredit ; or we hope some advantage ; and we feel tempted to act so as to secure, at any rate, the worldly good, or avoid the evil. Now in all such cases of conduct there is no end of arguing about right or wrong, if we once begin ; there are numberless ways of acting, each of which may be speciously defended by argument, but plain, pure-hearted common sense, generally speaking, at the very first sight decides the question for us without argument ; but if we do not listen promptly to this secret monitor, its light goes out at once, and we are left to the mercy of mere conjecture, and grope about with but second-best guides. Then seeming arguments in favour of deceit and evil compliance with the world's wishes, or of disgraceful indolence, urge us, and either prevail, or at least so confuse us, that we do not know how to act. Alas ! in ancient days it happened in this way, that Christians who were brought before their heathen persecutors for punishment, because they were Christians, sometimes came short

of the crown of martyrdom, "having loved this present world⁴," and so lost their way in the mazes of Satan's crafty arguments.

Temptations to unbelief may also be mentioned here. Speculating wantonly on sacred subjects, and jesting about them, offend us at first; and we turn away: but if in an evil hour we are seduced by the cleverness or wit of a writer or speaker, to listen to his impieties, who can say where we shall stop? Can we save ourselves from the infection of his profaneness? we cannot hope to do so. And when we come to a better mind, (if by God's grace this be afterwards granted to us,) what will be our state? like the state of men who have undergone some dreadful illness, which changes the constitution of the body. That ready and clear perception of right and wrong, which before directed us, will have disappeared, as beauty of person, or keenness of eye-sight in bodily disorders; and when we begin to try to make up our minds which way lies the course of duty on particular trials, we shall bring enfeebled, unsteady powers to the examination; and when we move to act, our limbs (as it were) will move the contrary way, and we shall do wrong when we wish to do right.

3. But there is another wretched effect of sinning once, which sometimes takes place;—not only the sinning that once itself, but being so seduced by it, as forthwith to continue in the commission of it ever afterwards, without seeking for arguments to meet our conscience withal; from a mere brutish, headstrong, infatuate greediness after its bad pleasures. There are beasts of prey which are said to abstain from blood till they taste it, but once tasting it, ever seek it: and, in like manner, there is a sort of thirst for sin which is born with us, but which grace quenches, and which is thus kept under *till* we, by our own act, rouse it again; and which, when once aroused, never can be allayed. We sin while we confess the wages of sin to be death.

4. Sometimes, I say, this is the immediate effect of a first transgression; and if not the first, yet it is always the tendency and the end of sinning at length, viz. to enslave us to it. Temptation is very powerful, it is true, when it comes first; but, then, its power lies in its own novelty; and, on the other hand, there

⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 10.

is power in the heart itself, divinely given, to resist it; but when we have long indulged sin, the mind has become sinful in its habit and character, and the SPIRIT of GOD having departed, it has no principle within it of strength sufficient to save it from spiritual death. What being can change its own nature? that would be almost ceasing to be itself: fire cannot cease to burn; the leopard changes not its spots, and ceases not to rend and devour; and the soul which has often sinned, cannot help sinning; but in this respect awfully differing from the condition of the senseless elements or brute animals, that its present state is all its own fault; that it might have hindered it, and will have one day to answer for not having hindered it.

Thus, easy as it is to avoid sin first of all, at length it is (humanly speaking) impossible. "Enter not into its path," saith the wise man; the two paths of right and wrong start from the same point, and at first are separated by a very small difference, so easy (comparatively) is it to choose the right instead of the wrong way: but wait awhile, and pursue the road leading to destruction, and you will find the distance between them has widened beyond measurement, and that between the two a great gulf has been sunk, so that you cannot pass from the one to the other, though you desire it ever so earnestly⁵.

Now to what do considerations such as these lead us, but to our LORD's simple and comprehensive precept, which is the same as Solomon's, but more impressively and solemnly urged on us, by the manner and time of His giving it? "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." To enter not the path 'of the wicked, to avoid it, and pass by it, what is this but the exercise of *watching*? Therefore HE insists upon it so much, knowing that in it our safety lies. But now on the other hand consider, *how* many are there among us who can be said to watch and pray? Is not the utmost we do to offer on Sunday some kind of prayer in Church to God; or sometimes some short prayer morning and evening in the week; and then go into the world with the same incaution and forgetfulness as if we had never entertained a serious thought? We go through the business of the day, quite forgetting, to any practical purpose, that all business has snares in

⁵ Luke xvi. 26.

it, and therefore needs caution. Let us ask ourselves this question, "How often do we think of Satan in the course of the day as our great tempter?" Yet surely he does not cease to be active because we do not think of him; and surely, too, his powers and devices were revealed to us by ALMIGHTY GOD, for the very purpose, that being not ignorant of them, we might watch against them. Who among us will not confess, that many is the time that he has mixed with the world, forgetting who the god of this world is? or rather, are not a great many of us living in habitual forgetfulness that this world is a scene of trial; that is, that this is its chief character, that all its employments, its pleasures, its occurrences, even the most innocent, the most acceptable to God, and the most truly profitable in themselves, are all the while so handled by Satan as may be the most conducive to our ruin, if he can possibly contrive it? There is nothing gloomy or superstitious in this, as the plain words of Scripture will abundantly prove to every enquirer. We are told "that the devil, our adversary, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour⁶;" and therefore are warned to "be sober, be vigilant." And assuredly our true comfort lies, not in disguising the truth from ourselves, but in knowing something more than this; that though Satan is against us, God is for us; that greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world⁷; and that He in every temptation will make a way for us to escape, that we may be able to bear it⁸.

God does His part most surely; and Satan too does his part: we alone are unconcerned. Heaven and hell are at war for us and against us, yet we trifle, and let life go on at random. Heaven and hell are before us as our own future abode, one or other of them; yet our own interest moves us no more than God's mercy. We treat sin, not as an enemy to be feared, abhorred, and shunned, but as a misfortune and a weakness; we do not pity and shun sinful men, but we enter into their path so far as to keep company with them; and next being tempted to copy them, we fall almost without an effort.

Be not you thus deceived and overcome, my brethren, by an evil heart of unbelief. Make up your minds to take God for your

⁶ 1 Pet. v. 8.⁷ 1 John iv. 4.⁸ 1 Cor. x. 13.

portion, and pray to HIM for grace to enable you so to do. Avoid the great evils of leisure, avoid the snare of having time on your hands. Avoid all bad thoughts, all corrupt or irreligious books. Avoid all bad company. Let nothing seduce you into it. Though you may be laughed at for your strictness; though you may lose thereby amusements which you would like to partake of; though you may thereby be ignorant of much which others know, and may appear to disadvantage when they are talking together; though you appear behind the rest of the world; though you be called a coward, or a child, or narrow-minded, or superstitious; whatever insulting words be applied to you, fear not, falter not, fail not; stand firm, quit you like men; be strong. They think that in the devil's service there are secrets worthy our inquiry, which you share not: yes, there are such, and such that it is a shame even to speak of them; and in like manner you have a secret which they have not, and which far surpasses theirs. "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear HIM." Those who obey GOD and follow CHRIST, have secret gains, so great, that, as well might we say heaven were like hell, as that these are like the gain which sinners have. They have a secret gift given them by their LORD and SAVIOUR, in proportion to their faith and love. They cannot describe it to others; they have not possession of it all at once; they cannot have the enjoyment of it, at this or that time when they will. It comes and goes according to the will of the Giver. It is given but in small measure to those who begin God's service. It is not given at all to those who follow HIM with a divided heart. To those who love the world, and yet are in a certain sense religious, and are well contented with their religious state, to them it is not given. But to those who give themselves up to their LORD and SAVIOUR; to those who surrender themselves soul and body, those who honestly say, "I am Thine, new-make me, do with me what Thou wilt," who say so not once or twice merely, or in a transport, but calmly and habitually; these are they who gain the LORD's secret gift, even the "white stone, and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it⁹." Sinners think that they know all that religion has to give,

⁹ Rev. ii. 17.

and over and above that, they know the pleasures of sin too. No, they do not, cannot, never will know the secret gift of God, till they repent and amend. They never will know what it is to see God, till they obey; nay, though they are to see HIM at the last day, even that will be no true sight of HIM, for the sight of that Holy One will then impart no comfort, no joy to them. They never will know the blessedness which HE has to give. They do know the satisfaction of sinning, such as it is; and alas, if they go on as they are going, they will know not only what sin is, but what hell is. But they never will know that great secret which is hid in the FATHER and in the SON.

Let us not then be seduced by the Tempter and his promises. He can show us no good. He has no good to give us. Rather let us listen to the gracious words of our MAKER and REDEEMER, "Call unto ME, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not¹."

¹ Jer. xxxiii. 3.

S E R M O N C L I I .

MIRACLES NO REMEDY FOR UNBELIEF.

NUMBERS xiv. 11.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke ME? and how long will it be ere they believe ME, for all the signs which I have showed among them?”

NOTHING, I suppose, is more surprising to us at first reading, than the history of God's chosen people; nay, on second and third reading, and on every reading till we learn to view it as God views it. It seems strange, indeed, to most persons, that the Israelites should have acted as they did, age after age, in spite of the miracles which were vouchsafed to them. The laws of nature were suspended again and again before their eyes; the most marvellous signs were wrought at the word of God's prophets, and for their deliverance; yet they did not obey their great Benefactor at all better than men now-a-days who have not these advantages, as we commonly consider them. Age after age God visited them by Angels, by inspired messengers; age after age they sinned. At last HE sent His well-beloved SON; and HE wrought miracles before them still more abundant, wonderful, and beneficent than any before HIM. What was the effect upon them of His coming? St. John tells us, “Then gathered the Chief Priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this Man doeth many miracles. . . . Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put HIM to death¹.”

¹ John xi. 47. 53.

In matter of fact, then, whatever be the reason, nothing is gained by miracles, nothing comes of miracles, as regards our religious views, principles, and habits. Hard as it is to believe, miracles certainly do not make men better; the history of Israel proves it. And the only mode of escaping this conclusion, to which some persons feel a great repugnance, is to fancy that the Israelites were much worse than other nations, which accordingly has been maintained. It has often been said, that they were stiffnecked and hardhearted beyond the rest of the world. Now, even supposing, for argument's sake, I should grant that they were so, this would not sufficiently account for the strange circumstance under consideration; for this people were not moved at all. It is not a question of more or less: surely they must have been altogether distinct from other men; destitute of the feelings and opinions of other men; nay, hardly partakers of human nature, if other men would, as a matter of course, have been moved by those miracles which had no influence whatever upon them. That there *are*, indeed, men in the world who would have been moved, and would have obeyed in consequence, I do not deny; such were to be found among the Israelites also; but I am speaking of men in general; and I say, that if the Israelites had a common nature with us, surely that insensibility which they exhibited on the whole, must be just what we should exhibit on the whole under the same circumstances.

It confirms this view of the subject to observe, that the children of Israel *are* like other men in all points of their conduct, save this insensibility, which other men have not had the opportunity to show as they had. There is no difference between their conduct and ours in point of *fact*; the difference is entirely in the external discipline to which God subjected them. Whether or not miracles ought to have influenced them in a way in which God's dealings in Providence do not influence us, so far is clear, that looking into their modes of living and of thought, we find a nature just like our own, not better indeed, but in no respect worse. Those evil tempers which the people displayed in the desert, their greediness, selfishness, murmuring, caprice, waywardness, fickleness, ingratitude, jealousy, suspiciousness, obstinacy, unbelief, all these are seen in the uneducated multitude now-a-days, according to their opportunity of displaying them.

The pride of Dathan and the presumption of Korah are still instanced in our higher ranks and among educated persons. Saul, Ahithophel, Joab, and Absalom, have had their parallels all over the world. I say there is nothing unlike the rest of mankind in the character or conduct of the chosen people; the difference solely is in God's dealings with them. They *act* as other men; it is their religion which is not as other men; it is miraculous; and the question is, how it comes to pass, their religion being different, their conduct is the same; and there are two ways of answering it; either by saying that they were worse than other men, and were not influenced by miracles when others would have been influenced, (as many persons are apt to think,) or (what I conceive to be the true reason) that, after all, the difference between miracle and no miracle is not so great in any case, in the case of any people, as to secure the success or account for the failure of religious truth. It was not that the Israelites were much more hardhearted than other people, but that a miraculous religion is not much more influential than other religions.

For I repeat, though it be granted that the Israelites were much worse than others, still that will not account for the fact that miracles made no impression whatever upon them. However sensual and obstinate they may be supposed to have been in natural character, yet if it be true that miracles have a necessary effect upon the human mind, they must be considered to have had some effect on their conduct for good or bad; if they had not a good effect, at least they must have had a bad; whereas the miracles left them very much the same in outward appearance as men are now-a-days, who neglect such warnings as now sent us, neither much more lawless and corrupt than they, nor the reverse. The point is, that while they were so hardened, as it appears to us, in their conduct towards their LORD and Governor, they are not much worse than other men in social life and personal behaviour. It is a rule that if men are extravagantly irreligious, profane, blasphemous, infidel, they are equally excessive and monstrous in other respects; whereas the Jews were like the Eastern nations around them, with this one peculiarity, that they had rejected direct and clear miraculous evidence, and the others had not. It seems, then, I say, to follow, that, guilty as were the Jews in disobeying ALMIGHTY GOD, and blind as they became

from shutting their eyes to the light, they were not much more guilty than others may be in disobeying HIM; that it is almost as great a sin to reject His service in the case of those who do not see miracles, as in the case of those who do; that the sight of miracles is not the way in which men come to believe and obey, nor the absence of them an excuse for not believing and obeying.

Now let me say something in explanation of this, at first sight, startling truth, that miracles on the whole would not make men in general more obedient or holy than they are, though they were generally displayed. It has sometimes been said by unbelievers, "If the Gospel were written on the Sun, I would believe it." Unbelievers have said so by way of excusing themselves for not believing it, as it actually comes to them; and I dare say some of us, my brethren, have before now uttered the same sentiment in our hearts, either in moments of temptation, or when under the upbraidings of conscience for sin committed. Now let us consider, why do we think so?

I ask, why should the sight of a miracle make you better than you are? Do you doubt at all the being and power of God? No. Do you doubt what you ought to *do*? No. Do you doubt at all that the rain, for instance, and sunshine, come from HIM? or that the fresh life of each year, as it comes, is His work, and that all nature bursts into beauty and richness at His bidding? You do not doubt it at all. Nor do you doubt, on the other hand, that it is your duty to obey HIM who made the world and who made you. And yet, with the knowledge of all this, you find you cannot prevail upon yourselves to do what you know you should do. Knowledge is not what you want to make you obedient. You have knowledge enough already. Now what truth would a miracle convey to you which you do not learn from the works of God around you? What would it teach you concerning God which you do not already believe without having seen it?

But, you will say, a miracle would startle you; true: but would not the startling pass away? could you be startled for ever? And what sort of a religion is that which consists in a state of fright and disturbance? Are you not continually startled by the accidents of life? You see, you hear things suddenly, which bring before your minds the thoughts of God and judgment; calamities befall you which for the time sober you,

Startling is not conversion, any more than knowledge is practice.

But you urge, that perhaps that startling might issue in amendment of life; that it might be the beginning of a new course, though it passed away itself; that a miracle would not indeed convert you, but it would be the first step towards thorough conversion; that it would be the turning point in your life, and would suddenly force your path into the right direction, and that in this way shocks and startlings, and all the agitation of the passions and affections, are really the means of conversion, though conversion be something more than they. This is very true: sudden emotions—fear, hope, gratitude, and the like, all do produce such effects sometimes; but why is a miracle necessary to produce such effects? Other things startle us besides miracles: we have a number of accidents sent us by God to startle us. HE has not left us without warnings, though HE has not given us miracles; and if we are not moved and converted by those which come upon us, the probability is, that, like the Jews, we should not be converted by miracles.

Yes, you say; but if one came from the dead, if you saw the spirit of some departed friend you knew on earth: what then? What would it tell you which you do not know now? You do not in your sober reason doubt the reality of the unseen world: not at all; only you cannot get yourself to act as if it *were* real. Would such a sight produce this effect? you think it would. Now I will grant this on one supposition. Do the startling accidents which happen to you now, produce *any* lasting effect upon you? Do they lead you to *any* habits of religion? If they do produce some effect, then I will grant to you that such a strange visitation, as you have supposed, would produce a greater effect; but if the events of life which now happen to you produce *no* lasting effect on you, and this I fear is the case, then too sure I am, that a miracle too would produce no lasting effect on you, though of course it would startle you more at the time. I say, I fear that what happens to you, as it is, produces no lasting effect on you. I mean, that the warnings which you really have, do not bring you to any habitual and regular religiousness; they may make you a little more afraid of this or that sin, or this or

that particular indulgence of it; but they do not tend at all to make you break with the world, and convert you to God. If they did make you take up religion in earnest, though in ever so poor a way, then I will grant that miracles would make you *more* in earnest. If God's *ordinary* warnings moved you, His extraordinary would move you more. It is quite true, that a serious mind would be made more serious by seeing a miracle; but this gives no ground for saying, that minds which are *not* serious, careless, worldly, self-indulgent persons, who are made not at all better by the warnings which *are* given them, would be made serious by those miraculous warnings which are not given. Of course it might so happen in this or that particular case, just as the same person is moved by one warning, not by another; not moved by a warning to-day, moved by a warning to-morrow; but I am sure, taking men as we find them, miracles would leave them, as far as their conduct is concerned, very much as they are. They would be very much startled and impressed at first, but the impression would wear away. And thus our SAVIOUR's words would come true of all those multitudes who have the Bible to read, and know what they ought to do, but do it not:—"If they hear not Moses and the Prophets," HE says, "neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Do we never recollect times, when we have said, "We shall never forget this; it will be a warning all through our lives?" have we never implored God's forgiveness with the most eager promises of amendment? have we never felt as if we were brought quite into a new world, in gratitude and joy? Yet was the result what we had expected? We cannot anticipate more from miracles, than before now we have anticipated from warnings, which came to nought.

And now, what *is* the real reason why we do not seek God with all our hearts, and devote ourselves to His service, if the absence of miracles be not the reason, as most assuredly it is not? What was it that made the Israelites disobedient, who *had* miracles? St. Paul informs us, and exhorts *us* in consequence. "Harden not your hearts, *as* in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness . . . take heed . . . lest there be in any of *you*," (as there was among the Jews) "an evil heart of

unbelief in departing from the Living God." Moses had been commissioned to say the same thing at the very time ; " O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear ME, and keep My Commandments always." We cannot serve God, because we want the will and the heart to serve HIM. We like anything better than religion, as the Jews before us. The Jews liked this world ; they liked mirth and feasting. " The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play ;" so do we. They liked glitter and show, and the world's fashions. " Give us a king like the nations," they said to Samuel ; so do we. They wished to be let alone ; they liked ease ; they liked their own way ; they disliked to make war against the natural impulses and course of their own minds ; they disliked to attend to the state of their souls, to have to treat themselves as spiritually sick and infirm, to watch, and rule, and chasten, and refrain, and change themselves ; and so do we. They disliked to think of God, and to observe and attend His ordinances, and to reverence HIM ; they called it a weariness to frequent His courts ; and they found this or that false worship more pleasant, satisfactory, congenial to their feelings, than the service of the Judge of quick and dead ; and so do we : and therefore we disobey God as they did,—not that we have not miracles ; for they actually had them, and it made no difference. We act as they did, though they had miracles and we have not ; because there is one cause *common* to both them and us—heartlessness in religious matters, an evil heart of unbelief ; both they and we disobey and disbelieve, because we do not love.

But this is not all ; in another respect we are really far more favoured than they were ; they had outward miracles ; we too have miracles, but they are not outward but inward. Ours are not miracles of evidence, but of power and influence. They are secret, and more wonderful and efficacious because secret. Their miracles were wrought upon external nature ; the sun stood still, and the sea parted. Ours are invisible, and are exercised upon the soul. They consist in the sacraments, and they just do that very thing which the Jewish miracles did not. They really touch the heart, though we so often resist their influence. If then we sin, as, alas ! we do, if we do not love God more than the Jews

did, if we have no heart for those "good things which pass men's understanding," we are not more excusable than they, but less so. For the supernatural works which God showed to them were wrought outwardly, not inwardly, and did not influence the will; they did but convey warnings; but the supernatural works which HE does towards us are in the heart, and impart grace; and if we disobey, we are not disobeying His command only, but resisting His presence.

This is our state; and perhaps so it is that, as the Israelites for forty years hardened their hearts in the wilderness, in spite of the manna and the quails, and the water from the rock, so we for a course of years have been hardening ours in spite of the spiritual gifts which are the portion of Christians. Instead of listening to the voice of conscience, instead of availing ourselves of the aid of heavenly grace, we have gone on year after year with the vain dream of turning to God some future day. Childhood and boyhood are past; youth, perhaps middle age, perhaps old age is come; and now we find that we cannot love the thing which God commandeth, and desire that which HE doth promise; and then, instead of laying the blame where it is due, on ourselves, for having hardened ourselves against the influences of grace, we complain that enough has not been done for us; we complain we have not enough light, enough help, enough inducements; we complain we have not seen miracles. Alas! how exactly are God's words fulfilled in us, which HE deigned to speak to His former people. "O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt ME and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

Let us then put aside vain excuses: and, instead of looking for outward events to change our course of life, be sure of this, that if our course of life is to be changed, it must be from within. God's grace moves us from within, so does our own will. External circumstances have no real power over us. If we do not love God, it is because we have not wished to love HIM, tried to love HIM,

² Isaiah v. 3, 4.

prayed to love HIM. We have not borne the idea and the wish in our mind day by day, we have not had it before us in the little matters of the day, we have not lamented that we loved HIM not, we have been too indolent, sluggish, carnal, to attempt to love HIM in little things, and begin at the beginning; we have shrunk from the effort of moving from within; we have been like persons who cannot get themselves to rise in the morning; and we have desired and waited for a thing impossible, to be changed once and for all, all at once, by some great excitement from without, or some great event, or some special season; something or other we go on expecting, which is to change us without our having the trouble to change ourselves. We covet some miraculous warning, or we complain that we are not in happier circumstances, that we have so many cares, or so few religious privileges; or we look forward for a time when religion will come easy to us as a matter of course. This we used to look out for as boys; we used to think there was time enough yet to think of religion, and that it was a natural thing, that it came without trouble or effort, for men to be religious as life went on; we fancied that all old persons must be religious; and now even, as grown men, we have not put off this deceit; but, instead of giving our hearts to GOD, we are waiting, with Felix, for a convenient season.

Let us rouse ourselves, and act as reasonable men, before it is too late; let us understand, as a first truth in religion, that *love* of heaven is the only *way* to heaven. Sight will not move us; else why did Judas persist in covetousness in the very presence of CHRIST? why did Balaam, whose "eyes were opened," remain with a closed heart? why did Satan fall, when he was a bright Archangel? Nor will reason subdue us; else why was the Gospel, in the beginning, "to the Greeks foolishness?" Nor will excited feelings convert us; for there is one who "heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;" yet "hath no root in himself," and "dureth" only "for a while." Nor will self-interest prevail with us; or the rich man would have been more prudent, whose "ground brought forth plentifully," and have recollected that "that night his soul" might be "required of him." Let us understand that nothing but the love of God can

make us believe in HIM or obey HIM ; and let us pray HIM, who has prepared for them that love HIM, such good things as pass man's understanding, to pour into our hearts such love towards HIM, that we, loving HIM above all things, may obtain His promises, which exceed all that we can desire.

SERMON CLIII.

JOSIAH, A PATTERN FOR THE IGNORANT.

2 KINGS xxii. 19, 20.

“Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before ME ; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD. Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace ; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place.”

KING JOSIAH, to whom these words are addressed, was one of the most pious of the Jewish kings, and the most eminent reformer of them all. On him, the last sovereign of David's house, (for his sons had not an independent rule,) descended the zeal and prompt obedience, which raised the son of Jesse from the sheepfold to the throne, as a man after God's own heart. Thus, as an honour to David, the blessing upon his posterity remained in its fulness even to the end ; its light not waxing “dim,” nor “its natural force abating.”

Both the character and the fortunes of Josiah are described in the text ; his character, in its saying that his “heart was tender,” and that he feared God ; and his fortunes, *viz.* an untimely death, designed as a reward for his obedience : and the text is a part of the answer which the Prophetess Huldah was instructed to make

to him, when he applied for encouragement and guidance after accidentally finding the book of Moses' Law in the Temple. This discovery is the most remarkable occurrence of his reign, and will fitly serve to introduce and connect together what I wish now to set before you concerning Josiah.

The discovery of Moses's Law in the Temple, is a very important occurrence in the history, because it shows us that Holy Scripture had been for a long while neglected, and to all practical purposes lost. By the book of the law is meant, I need scarcely say, the five books of Moses, which stand first in the Bible. These made up one book or volume, and were to a Jew the most important part of the Old Testament, as containing the original covenant between God and His people, and explaining to them what their place was in the scheme of God's providence, what were their duties, and what their privileges. Moses had been directed to enforce the study of this law on the Israelites in various ways. He exhorts them to "lay up his words in their heart and in their soul, and to bind them for a sign upon their hand, that they might be as frontlets between their eyes." "And ye shall teach them your children," he proceeds, "speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates¹." Besides this general provision, it was ordered that once in seven years the law should be read to the whole people assembled at the feast of tabernacles². And further still, it was provided, that in case they ever had kings, each king was to write out the whole of it from the original copy which was kept in the ark. "And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life . . . that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand or to the left; to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel³."

However, considering how soon the nation fell into a general disregard of the law and worship which God gave them, it is not wonderful that these wholesome precepts were neglected, which

¹ Deut. xi. 18—20.

² Ibid. xxxi. 9—13.

³ Ibid. xvii. 19, 20.

could not be performed without testifying against their multiplied transgressions. And much more when they took to themselves idols, did they neglect, of course, to read the law which condemned them. And when they had set a king over them against the will of God, it is not strange that their kings, in turn, should neglect the direction given them to copy out the law for themselves; such kings especially as fell into idolatry.

All this applies particularly to the age in which Josiah succeeded to the throne, so that it is in no way surprising that he knew nothing of the law till it was by chance found in the Temple some years after his accession. The last good king of Judah before him was Hezekiah, who had been dead sixty or seventy years. That religious king had been succeeded by his son Manasseh, the most profane of all the line of David. He it was who committed those inextinguishable sins which sealed the sentence of Judah's destruction. He had set up an idol in the Temple; had made his son pass through the fire; had dealt with familiar spirits and wizards; had "shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another;" in a word, had "done wickedly above all that the Amorites did which were before him⁴." On his return from captivity in Babylon, whither he was taken captive, Manasseh attempted a reformation; but, alas, he found it easier to seduce than to reclaim his people⁵. Amon, who succeeded him, followed the first ways of his father during his short reign. Instead of repenting, as his father had done, he "trespassed more and more⁶." After a while, his subjects conspired and slew him. Josiah was the son of this wicked king.

Here, then, we have sufficient explanation of Josiah's ignorance of the law of Moses. He was brought up among very wicked men—in a corrupt court—after an apostasy of more than half a century; far from God's Prophets, and in the midst of idols.

In such times was Josiah born; and like Manasseh, he came to the throne in his boyhood. As if to show us that religion depends on a man's self (under God, who gives grace), on the state of his heart, not on outward circumstances, Manasseh was the son of the pious Hezekiah, and Josiah was the son of wicked Amon. Josiah was but eight years old when his father was

⁴ 2 Kings xxi. 11.⁵ 2 Chron. xxxiii. 15—25.⁶ Ibid. 23.

slain. We hear nothing of his boyhood ; but scarcely was he of age to think for himself, and to profess himself a servant of the true God, but he chose that "good part which could not be taken away from him⁷." "In the eighth year of his reign (*i. e.* when he was sixteen years of age) while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father⁸." Blessed are they who so seek, for they shall find. Josiah had not the aid of a revealed volume, at least of the law ; he was surrounded by the diversities of idol-worship, the sophistries of unbelief, the seductions of sinful pleasure. He had every temptation to go wrong ; and had he done so, we might have made allowances, and said that he was not so bad as the other kings, for he knew no better ; he had not sinned against light. Yes, he would have sinned against light—the event shows it ; for if he had light enough to go right (which he had, for he did go right), it follows, that if he had gone wrong, it would have been against light. Not, indeed, so strong and clear a light as Solomon disobeyed, or Joash ; still against his better knowledge. This is very important. Every one, even the poorest and most ignorant, has knowledge enough to be religious. Education does not make a man religious : nor, again, is it an excuse for a man's disobedience, that he has not been educated in his duty. It only makes him less guilty than those who have been educated ; that is all : he is still guilty. Here, I say, the poorest and most unlearned among us, may take a lesson from a Jewish king. Scarcely can any one in a Christian land be in more disadvantageous circumstances than Josiah—nay, scarcely in a heathen : he had idolatry around him, and at the age he began to seek God, his mind was unformed. What, then, was it guided him ? whence his knowledge ? He had that, which all men have, heathen as well as Christians, till they pervert or blunt it—a natural sense of right and wrong ; and he did not blunt it. In the words of the text, "his heart was *tender* ;" he acknowledged a constraining force in the Divine voice within him—he heard and obeyed. Though all the world had told him otherwise, he could not believe and would not that he might sin without offence—with impunity ; that he might be sensual, or cruel, after the manner of idolaters, and nothing would come of

⁷ Luke x. 42.⁸ 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3.

it. And further, amid all the various worships offered to his acceptance, this same inward sense of his, strengthened by practice, unhesitatingly chose out the true one, the worship of the God of Israel. It chose between the better and the worse, though it could not have discovered the better of itself. Thus he was led right. In his case was fulfilled the promise, "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God⁹." Or, in the Psalmist's words, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments¹." Or (as he elsewhere expresses it), "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts²."

Such was the beginning of Josiah's life. At sixteen, he began to seek after the God of his fathers; at twenty, he commenced his reformation, with a resolute faith and true-hearted generous devotion. From the language of Scripture, it would seem, he began of *himself*; thus he is left a pattern to all ages of prompt obedience for conscience-sake. Jeremiah did not begin to prophesy till *after* the king entered on his reformation, as if the great prophet's call were delayed on purpose to try the strength of Josiah's loyalty to his God, while his hands were yet unaided by the exertions of others, or by the guidance of inspired men.

What knowledge of God's dealings with his nation and of His revealed purposes Josiah had at this time, we can only conjecture; from the priests he might learn much generally, and from the popular belief. The miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's army was not so long since, but it proved to him God's especial protection of the Jewish people. Manasseh's repentance was more recent still; and the Temple itself, and its service, contained much doctrine to a religious mind, even apart from the law or the prophets. But he had no accurate knowledge.

At twenty, then, he commenced his reformation. At first, not having the book of the law to guide him, he took such measures as natural conscience suggested; he put away idolatry generally. Thus he set out, not knowing whither he went. But it is the rule of God's providence, that those who act up to their light, shall

⁹ Isa. l. 10.¹ Ps. cxi. 10.² Ibid. cxix. 100.

be rewarded with clearer light. To him that hath, more shall be given. Accordingly, while he was thus engaged, after a few years, he found the book of the law in the *course* of his reformatations. He was seeking God in the way of His commandments, and God met him there. He set about repairing the Temple; and it was in the course of this pious work that the high priest found a copy of the Law of Moses in the Temple, probably the original copy which was placed in the ark. Josiah's conduct on this discovery marks his character. Many men, certainly many young men, who had been so zealous as he had already shown himself for six years, would have prided themselves on what they had done, and though they began humbly, by this time had become self-willed, self-confident, and hard-hearted. He had already been engaged in repressing and punishing God's enemies—this had a tendency to infect him with spiritual pride; and he had a work of destruction to do—this, too, might have made him cruel. Far from it: his peculiar praise is singleness of mind, a pure conscience. Even after years of activity against idolatry, in the words of the text, "his heart was tender," and he still "humbled himself before God." He felt full well the immeasurable distance between himself and his MAKER; he felt his own blindness and weakness; and he still earnestly sought to know his duty better than he did, and to practise it more entirely. His was not that stern enthusiasm which has displayed itself in some so-called reformatations, fancying itself God's peculiar choice, and "despising others." Here we have the pattern of reformers; singleness of heart, gentleness of temper, in the midst of zeal, resoluteness, and decision in action. All God's Saints have this union of opposite graces; Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Nehemiah, St. Paul: but in which of them all is the wonder-working power of grace shown more attractively than in Josiah? "Out of the strong came forth sweetness³;" or perhaps, as we may say more truly, Out of the sweet came forth strength.

Observe, then, his conduct when the law was read to him: "When the king had heard the words of the book of the law, *he rent his clothes*⁴." He thought far more of what he had not done, than of what he had done. He felt how incomplete his refor-

³ Judges xiv. 14.

⁴ 2 Kings xxii. 11.

mation had been; and he felt how far more guilty his whole people were than he had supposed, receiving, as they had, such precise guidance in Scripture what to do, and such solemn command to do it; and he learned, moreover, the fearful punishment which was hanging over them; for in that book of the law were contained the threats of vengeance to be fulfilled in case of transgression. The passages read to him by the high priest seem to have been some of those contained in the Book of Deuteronomy, in which Moses sets good and evil before the people, to choose their portion. "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil . . . I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing⁵." "A blessing and a curse; a blessing if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your GOD . . . a curse if ye will not obey⁶." And there was more than the mere words to terrify him; there had been a fulfilment of them. Samaria, the ten revolting tribes, the kingdom of Israel, had been led away captive. Doubtless he already knew that their sins had caused it; but he found in the book of the law it had been even threatened them beforehand as the punishment; and he discovered that the same punishment awaited his own people, should they persist in sin. Nay, a judgment had already taken place in Judah; for Manasseh, his grandfather, had been carried away into Babylon, and only restored upon his repentance. Read the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, in order to see what was to be the curse of disobedience; or again, consider the words of the 29th chapter: "Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your GOD . . . that thou shouldest enter into covenant with HIM, and into His oath; . . . neither with you *only* do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the LORD our GOD, and *also* with him that is not here with us this day . . . Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our GOD," (alas! as it had happened in the event, even all *ten* tribes, and then the whole twelve had fallen away,) "to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he

⁵ Deut. xxx. 15. 19.⁶ Deut. xi. 26—28.

heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him . . . so that . . . the strangers that shall come from a far land . . . when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the LORD hath laid upon it . . . that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein . . . Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD GOD of their fathers . . . for they went and served other gods . . . and the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and cast them into another land." These words, or such as these, either about the people or relating to his own duties⁷, Josiah read in the book of the law; and thinking of the captivity which had overtaken Israel already, and the sins of his own people Judah, he rent his clothes. Then he bade the priests inquire of God for him what he ought to do to avert His anger. "Go," he said, "enquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book⁸." It is observable, that not even yet does he seem to have known the prophets Jeremiah or Zephaniah, though the former had been called to his office some years. Such was God's pleasure. And the priests and scribes about him, though they seconded his pious designs, were in no sense his guides; they were unacquainted with the Law of Moses, and with the prophets, who were interpreters of that law. But prophets were, through God's mercy, in every city: and though Jeremiah might be silent or might be away, still there were revelations from God even in Jerusalem. To one of these prophets the priests applied. Shallum was keeper of the king's wardrobe—his wife Huldah was known to be gifted with the spirit of prophecy. To her they went. She answered in the

⁷ Vide Deut. xvii.

⁸ 2 Chron. xxxiv. 21.

words of which the text forms a part: "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to ME, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: because they have forsaken ME, and have burnt incense unto other gods . . . My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. But to the king of Judah, which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, as touching the words which thou hast heard; because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before ME; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD. Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again."

How King Josiah conducted himself after this message I need not describe at any length. We have heard it in the First Lesson of this Service⁹. He assembled all Judah at Jerusalem, and publicly read the words of the Book of the Law; then he made all the people renew the covenant with the God of their fathers; then he proceeded more exactly in the work of reformation in Judah and Israel, keeping closely to the directions of the Law; and after that he held his celebrated passover. Thus his greater knowledge was followed by stricter obedience: his accurate attention to the whole ritual is the very praise bestowed on his passover; "Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges¹." Whatever he did, he did it with all his heart: "Like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses²."

Passing by the particulars of his reformation, let us come to the fulfilment of the promise made to him by Huldah, as the reward of his obedience. "Behold therefore, I will gather thee to thy

⁹ Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 22.

² Ibid. 25.

fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place." His reward was an early death; the event proved that it was a violent one also. The king of Egypt came up against the king of Assyria through the land of Judah; Josiah, bound perhaps by an alliance to the king of Assyria, or for some strong reason unknown, opposed him; a battle followed; Josiah disguised himself that he might not be marked out for death; but his hour was come—the promise of release was to be accomplished. "And the archers shot at king³ Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. His servants, therefore . . . brought him to Jerusalem; and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers³." Thus the best king of Judah died like Ahab, the worst king of Israel; so little may we judge of God's love or displeasure by outward appearances. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness⁴."

The sacred narrative continues: "And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel:" probably there was a yearly commemoration of his death; and so great was the mourning at the time, that we find it referred to in the Prophet Zechariah⁵ almost as a proverb. So fell the last sovereign of the house of David. God continued His promised mercies to His people through David's line till they were too corrupt to receive them; the last king of the favoured family was forcibly and prematurely cut off, in order to make way for the display of God's vengeance in the captivity of the whole nation. He was taken out of the way; they were carried off to Babylon. "Weep ye not for the dead," says the prophet, "neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country⁶." As for

³ 2 Chron. xxxv. 23—25.

⁴ Isa. lvii. 1.

⁵ Zech. xii. 11.

⁶ Jer. xxii. 10.

Josiah, as it is elsewhere written of him, "His remembrance . . . is sweet as honey in all mouths, and as music at a banquet of wine. He behaved himself uprightly in the conversion of the people, and took away the abominations of iniquity. He directed his heart unto the LORD, and in the time of the ungodly he established the worship of God. All, except David, and Ezekias, and Josias, were defective; for they forsook the law of the Most High, even the kings of Juda failed⁷."

In conclusion, my brethren, I would have you observe in what Josiah's chief excellence lay. This is the character given him when his name is first mentioned; "He did . . . right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left⁸." He kept the narrow middle way. Now what is this strict virtue called? it is called *faith*. It is no matter whether we call it faith or conscientiousness, they are in substance one and the same: where there is faith, there is conscientiousness—where there is conscientiousness, there is faith; they may be distinguished from each other in words, but they are not divided in fact. They belong to one, and but one habit of mind—dutifulness; they show themselves in obedience, in the careful anxious observance of God's will, however we learn it. Hence it is that St. Paul tells us that "the just shall live by faith" under *every* dispensation of God's mercy. And this is called *faith*, because it implies a reliance on the mere word of the unseen God overpowering the temptations of sight. Whether it be we read and accept His word in Scripture (as Christians do), or His word in our conscience, the law written on the heart (as is the case with heathens); in either case, it is by following it, in spite of the seductions of the world around us, that we please God. St. Paul calls it faith; saying after the prophet, "The just shall live by faith:" and St. Peter, in the tenth chapter of the Acts, calls it "fearing and *working righteousness*," where he says, that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." It is all one: both Apostles say that God loves those who prefer Him to the world; whose *character and frame* of mind is such. Elsewhere St. Paul also speaks like St. Peter, when he declares

⁷ Eccclus. xlix. 1—4.

⁸ 2 Kings xxii. 2.

that "God will render eternal life to them, who by "patient *continuance in well-doing* seek for glory⁹." St. John adds his testimony: "Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous¹." And our SAVIOUR'S last words at the end of the whole Scripture, long after the coming of the Spirit, after the death of all the Apostles but St. John, are the same: "Blessed are they that *do His commandments*, that they may *have right* to the tree of life²."

And if such is God's mercy, as we trust, to all men, where any one with a perfect heart seeks Him, what think you is His mercy upon Christians? Something far greater, and more wonderful; for we are elected out of the world in JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOUR to a glory incomprehensible and eternal. We are the heirs of promise; God has loved us before we were born. He had us taken into His Church in our infancy. He by Baptism made us new creatures, giving us powers which we by nature had not, and raising us to the unseen society of Saints and Angels. And all this we enjoy on our faith; that is, on our believing that we have them, and seriously trying to profit by them. May God grant, that we, like Josiah, may improve our gifts, and trade and make merchandise with them, so that, when He cometh to reckon with us, we may be accepted!

⁹ Rom. ii. 7.

¹ 1 John iii. 7.

² Rev. xxii. 14.

SERMON CLIV.

INWARD WITNESS TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.

PSALM cxix. 99, 100.

“ I have more understanding than my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my study ; I am wiser than the aged, because I keep Thy commandments.”

IN these words the Psalmist declares, that in consequence of having obeyed God's commandments he had obtained more wisdom and understanding than those who had first enlightened his ignorance, and were once more enlightened than he. As if he said, “ When I was a child, I was instructed in religious knowledge by kind and pious friends, who told me who my Maker was, what great things HE had done for me, how much I owed to HIM, and how I was to serve HIM. All this I learned from them, and I rejoice that they taught it me : yet they did more ; they set me in the way to gain a knowledge of religious truth in another and higher manner. They not only taught me, but trained me ; they were careful that I should not only know my duty, but do it. They obliged me to obey ; they obliged me to begin a religious course of life, which, (praised be God !) I have ever pursued ; and this obedience to His commandments has brought me to a clearer knowledge of His truth, than any mere instruction could convey. I have been taught, not from without merely, but from within. I have been taught by means

of a purified heart, by a changed will, by chastened reins, by a mortified appetite, by a bridled tongue, by eyes corrected and subdued. 'I have more understanding than my teachers, for Thy testimonies,' O LORD, 'are my study; I am wiser than the aged, because I keep Thy commandments.'"

We may sometimes hear men say, "How do you know that the Bible is true? You are told so in Church; your parents believed it; but might they not be mistaken? and if so, you are mistaken also. Now to this objection it may be answered, and very satisfactorily, "Is it then nothing toward convincing us of the truth of the Gospel, that those whom we love best and reverence most, believe it? Is it against reason to think that they are right, who have considered the matter most deeply? Do we not receive what they tell us in other matters, though we cannot prove the truth of their information; for instance, in matters of art and science; why then is it irrational to believe them in religion also? Have not the wisest and holiest of men been Christians? and have not unbelievers, on the contrary, been very generally signal instances of pride, discontent, and profligacy? Again, are not the principles of unbelief certain to dissolve human society? and is not this plain fact, candidly considered, enough to show that unbelief cannot be a right condition of our nature? for who can believe that we were intended to live in anarchy? If we have no good reason for believing, at least we have no good reason for disbelieving. If you ask why we are Christians, we ask in turn, Why should we not be Christians? it will be enough to remain where we are, till you do, what you never can do,—prove to us for certain, that the Gospel is not divine; it is enough for us to be on the side of good men, to be under the feet of the Saints, to 'go our way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and to feed our kids beside the shepherds' tents ¹.'"

This would be quite a sufficient answer, had we nothing else to say; but I will give another, and that in connexion with the text; I will show you that the most unlearned Christian may have a very real and substantial argument, an intimate token, of the truth of the Gospel, quite independent of the authority of his

¹ Cant. i. 8.

parents and teachers ; nay, that were all the world, even were his teachers, to tell him that religion was a dream, still he would have a good reason for believing it true.

This reason, I say, is contained in the text—" I have more understanding than the aged, *because* I keep Thy commandments." By obeying the commands of Scripture, we learn that these commands really come from God ; by trying we make proof ; by doing we come to know. Now how comes this to pass ? It happens in several ways.

1st.—Consider the Bible tells us to be meek, humble, single-hearted, and teachable. Now, it is plain that humility and teachableness are qualities of mind necessary for arriving at the truth in any subject, and in religious matters as well as others. By obeying Scripture then, in practising humility and teachableness, it is evident we are at least *in the way* to arrive at the knowledge of God. On the other hand, impatient, proud, self-confident, obstinate men, are generally wrong in the opinions they form of persons and things. Prejudice and self-conceit blind the eyes and mislead the judgment, whatever be the subject inquired into. For instance, how often do men mistake the characters and misconstrue the actions of others ! how often are they deceived in them ! how often do the young form acquaintances injurious to their comfort and good ! how often do men embark in foolish and ruinous schemes ! how often do they squander their money, and destroy their worldly prospects ! And what, I ask, is so frequent a cause of these many errors as wilfulness and presumption ? The same thing happens also in religious inquiries. When I see a person hasty and violent, harsh and high-minded, careless of what others feel, and disdainful of what they think ;—when I see such a one proceeding to inquire into religious subjects, I am sure beforehand he cannot go right—he will not be led into all the truth—it is contrary to the nature of things and the experience of the world, that he should find what he is seeking. I should say the same were he seeking to find out what to believe or do in any other matter not religious,—but especially in any such important and solemn inquiry ; for the *fear* of the LORD, (humbleness, teachableness, reverence towards HIM,) is the very *beginning* of wisdom, as Solomon tells us ; it leads us to think over things modestly and honestly, to

examine patiently, to bear doubt and uncertainty, to wait perseveringly for an increase of light, and be slow to speak, and to be deliberate in deciding.

2. Consider, in the next place, that those who are trained carefully according to the precepts of Scripture, gain an elevation, a delicacy, refinement, and sanctity of mind, which is most necessary for judging fairly of the truth of Scripture.

A man who loves sin does not wish the gospel to be true, and therefore is not a fair judge of it; a mere man of the world, a selfish and covetous man, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, is, from a sense of interest, against that Bible which condemns him, and would account that man indeed a messenger of good tidings of peace who could prove to him that CHRIST's doctrine was not from God. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved²." I do not mean to say that such men necessarily reject the word of God, as if we could dare to conclude that all who do not reject it are therefore sure to be not covetous, drunkards, extortioners, and the like; for it is often a man's interest not openly to reject it, though it be against him, and the bulk of men are inconsistent, and have some good feelings left, even amid their sins and vices, which keep them from going all lengths. But, while they still profess to honour, at least they try to pervert and misinterpret Scripture, and that comes to the same thing. They try to persuade themselves that CHRIST will save them, though they continue in sin; or they wish to believe that future punishment will not last for ever; or they conceive that their good deeds or habits, few and miserable as they are at best, will make up for the sins of which they are too conscious. Whereas such men as have been taught betimes to work with God their SAVIOUR, in ruling their hearts and curbing their sinful passions and changing their wills, though they are still sinners, have not within them that treacherous enemy of the truth which misleads the judgments of irreligious men.

Here, then, are two very good reasons at first sight, why men who obey the Scripture precepts are more likely to arrive at religious truth, than those who neglect them; first, because such men are teachable men; secondly, because they are pure in

² John iii. 20.

heart; such shall see God, whereas the proud provoke His anger, and the carnal are His abhorrence.

But to proceed. Consider, moreover, that those who try to obey God evidently gain a knowledge of themselves at least; and this may be shown to be the first and principal step towards knowing God. For let us suppose a child, under God's blessing, profiting by his teacher's guidance, and trying to do his duty and please God. He will perceive that there is much in him which ought not to be in him. His own natural sense of right and wrong tells him that peevishness, sullenness, deceit, and self-will, are tempers and principles of which he has cause to be ashamed, and he feels that these bad tempers and principles are in his heart. As he grows older, he will understand this more and more. Wishing, then, and striving to act up to the law of conscience, he will yet find that, with his utmost efforts, and after his most earnest prayers, he still falls short of what he knows to be right, and what he aims at. Conscience, however, being respected, will become a more powerful and enlightened guide than before; it will become more refined and hard to please; and he will understand and perceive more clearly the distance that exists between his own conduct and thoughts, and perfection. He will admire and take pleasure in the holy law of God, of which he reads in Scripture; but he will be humbled withal, as understanding himself to be a continual transgressor against it. Thus he will learn from experience the doctrine of original sin, before he knows the actual name for it. He will, in fact, say to himself, what St. Paul describes all beginners in religion as saying, "What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity. I know that in my flesh dwelleth no good thing³." The effect of this experience will be to make him take it for granted as an elementary truth that he cannot gain heaven for himself, to make him feel himself guilty before God; and to feel, moreover, that even were he admitted into the Divine presence, yet, till his heart be (so to say) made over again, he cannot perfectly enjoy God. This, surely, is the state of self-knowledge;

³ Rom. vii. 15. 18. 22, 23.

these are the convictions, to which every one is brought on, who attempts honestly to obey the precepts of God. I do not mean that all that I have been saying will necessarily pass through his mind, and in the same order, or that he will be conscious of it, or be able to speak of it, but that on the whole thus he will feel.

When then even an unlearned person thus trained, from his own heart, from the action of his mind upon itself, from struggles with self, from an attempt to follow those impulses of his own nature which he feels to be highest and noblest, from a vivid natural perception, (natural, though cherished and strengthened by prayer—natural, though unfolded and diversified by practice—natural, though of that new and second nature which God the HOLY GHOST gives),—from an innate, though supernatural perception of the great vision of Truth which is external to him, (a perception of it, not indeed in its fulness, but in glimpses, and by fits and seasons, and in its persuasive influences, and through a courageous following on after it, as a man in the dark might follow after some dim and distant light)—I say, when a person thus trained from his own heart, reads the declarations and promises of the Gospel, are we to be told that he believes in them merely because he has been bid believe in them? Do we not see he has besides this a something in his own breast which bears a confirming testimony to their truth? He reads that the heart is “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked⁴,” and that he inherits an evil nature from Adam, and that he is still under its power, except so far as he has been renewed. Here is a mystery; but his own actual and too bitter experience bears witness to the truth of the declaration; he feels the mystery of iniquity within him. He reads, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord⁵,” and his own love of what is true and lovely and pure, approves and embraces the doctrine as coming from God. He reads, that God is angry at sin, and will punish the sinner, and that it is a hard matter, nay, an impossibility, for us to appease His wrath. Here, again, is a mystery: but here, too, his conscience anticipates the mystery, and convicts him; his mouth is stopped. And when he goes on to read that the SON OF GOD has HIMSELF come into the world in our flesh, and died upon the Cross for us, does he not, amid the awful mysteriousness of the

⁴ Jer. xvii. 9.

⁵ Heb. xii. 14.

doctrine, find those words fulfilled in him which that gracious SAVIOUR uttered, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto ME?" He cannot choose but believe in HIM. HE says, "O LORD, THOU art stronger than I, and hast prevailed."

Here then, I say, he surely possesses an evidence perfectly distinct from the authority of superiors and teachers; like St. Paul, he is in one way not taught of men, "but by the revelation of JESUS CHRIST⁶." Others have but bid him look-within, and pray for God's grace to be enabled to know himself; and the more he understands his own heart, the more are the Gospel doctrines recommended to his reason. He is assured that CHRIST does not speak of HIMSELF, but that His word is from God. He is ready, with the Samaritan woman, to say to all around him, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the CHRIST?" Or, again, in the words which the Samaritans of the same city used to the woman after conversing with CHRIST; "Now we believe, *not* because of thy saying" (not merely on the authority of friends and relatives); "for *we* have heard HIM ourselves, and know that this is indeed the CHRIST, the SAVIOUR of the world."

The Bible, then, seems to say, "God is not a hard master to require belief, without affording grounds for believing; only follow your own sense of right, and you will gain from that very obedience to your MAKER, which natural conscience enjoins, a conviction of the truth and power of that REDEEMER whom a supernatural message has revealed; do but examine your thoughts and doings; do but attempt what you know to be God's will, and you will most assuredly be led on into all the truth: you will recognize the force, meaning, and awful graciousness of the Gospel Creed; you will bear witness to the truth of one doctrine, by your own past experience of yourselves; of another, by seeing that it is suited to your necessity; of a third, by finding it fulfilled upon your obeying it. As the prophet says, "Bring ye" your offering "into mine house," saith the LORD, "and prove ME now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it⁸."

⁶ Gal. i. 12.

⁷ John iv. 29.

⁸ Mal. iii. 10.

My brethren, it is always reasonable to insist upon these subjects ; but it is peculiarly so in times when a spirit of presumptuous doubting is in many places abroad. As many of us as live in the world must expect to hear our faith despised, and our conscientious obedience ridiculed ; we must expect to be taunted and scorned by those who find it much easier to attack another's creed than to state their own. A little learning is a dangerous thing. When men think they know more than others, they often talk for the sake of talking, or to show their ability (as they think), their shrewdness, and depth ; and they speak lightly of the All-Holy God, to gratify their empty self-conceit and vanity. And often it answers no purpose to dispute with such persons ; for not having been trained up to obey their conscience, to restrain their passions, and examine their hearts, they will assent to nothing you can say ; they will be questioning and arguing about every thing ; they have no common ground with you, and when they talk of religion they are like blind persons talking of colours. If you urge how great a gift it is to be at peace with God, or of the arduousness and yet desirableness of perfection, or the beauty of saintliness, or the dangerousness of the world, or the blessedness of self-control, or the glory of virginity, or the answers which God gives to prayer, or the marvellousness and almost miraculousness of His providences, or the comfort of religion in affliction, or the strength given you over your passions in the Most Holy Sacrament, such persons understand you not at all. They will laugh, they will scoff, at best they will wonder : any how what you say is no evidence to *them*. You cannot convince them, because you differ from them in first principles ; it is not that they start from the same point as you, and afterwards strike off in some wayward direction ; but their course is altogether distinct, they have no point in common with you. For such persons then you can only pray ; God alone can bring down pride, self-conceit, an arrogant spirit, a presumptuous temper ; God alone can dissipate prejudice ; God alone can overcome flesh and blood. Useful as argument may be for converting a man, in such cases God seldom condescends to employ it. Yet, let not such vain or ignorant reasoners convert you to unbelief in great matter or little ; let them not persuade you, that your faith is built on the mere teaching of fallible men ; do not

you be ridiculed out of your confidence and hope in CHRIST. You may, if you will, have an inward witness arising from obedience ; and though you cannot make them see it, you can see it yourselves, which is the great thing ; and it will be quite sufficient, with God's blessing, to keep you stedfast in the way of life.

Lastly, let me remark how dangerous their state is, who are content to take the truths of the Gospel on trust, without caring whether or not those truths are realized in their own heart and conduct. Such men, when assailed by ridicule and sophistry, are likely to fall ; they have no root in themselves ; and let them be quite sure, that should they fall away from the faith, it will be a slight thing at the last day to plead that subtle arguments were used against them, that they were altogether unprepared and ignorant, and that their seducers prevailed over them by the display of some little cleverness and human knowledge. The inward witness to the truth lodged in our hearts is a match for the most learned infidel or sceptic that ever lived : though, to tell the truth, such men are generally very shallow and weak, as well as wicked ; generally know only a little, pervert what they know, assume false principles, and distort or suppress facts : but were they as accomplished as the very author of evil, the humblest Christian, armed with sling and stone, and supported by God's unseen might, is, as far as his own faith is concerned, a match for them. And, on the other hand, the most acute of reasoners and most profound of thinkers, the most instructed in earthly knowledge, is nothing, except he has also within him the presence of the SPIRIT of truth. Human knowledge, though of great power when joined to a pure and humble faith, is of no power when opposed to it, and, after all, for the comfort of the individual Christian, it is of little value. May we then all grow in heavenly knowledge, and, with that end, labour to improve what is already given us, be it more or be it less, knowing that " he that is faithful in little is faithful also in much," and that " to him that hath, more shall be given."

S E R M O N C L V .

JEREMIAH, A LESSON FOR THE DISAPPOINTED.

JEREMIAH i. 8.

“ Be not afraid of their faces : for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the
LORD.”

THE prophets were ever ungratefully treated by the Israelites ; they were resisted, their warnings neglected, their good services forgotten. But there was this difference between the earlier and the later prophets ; the earlier lived and died in honour among their people, in outward honour ; though hated and thwarted by the wicked, they were exalted to high places, and ruled in the congregation. Moses, for instance, was in trouble from his people all his life long, but to the end he was their lawgiver and judge. Samuel, too, even though rejected, was still held in reverence ; and when he died, “all the Israelites were gathered together and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah¹.” David died on a royal throne. But in the latter times, the prophets were not only feared and hated by the enemies of God, but cast out of the vineyard. As the time approached for the coming of the true Prophet of the Church, the Son of God, they resembled Him in their earthly fortunes more and more ; and as He was to suffer, so did they. Moses was a ruler, Jeremiah was an outcast : Samuel was buried in peace, John the Baptist was beheaded. In St. Paul’s words, they “ had trial of

¹ 1 Sam. xxv. 1.

cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned; they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth ²."

Of these, Elijah, who lived in the wilderness, and the hundred prophets whom Obadiah fed by fifty in a cave, are examples of the wanderers. And Micaiah, who was appointed the bread of affliction and the water of affliction by an idolatrous king, is the specimen of those who "had trial of bonds and imprisonment." Of those who were sawn asunder and slain with the sword, Isaiah is the chief, who, as tradition goes, was by order of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, sawn asunder with a wooden saw. And of those who were stoned, none is more famous than Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, "who was slain between the temple and the altar ³." But of all the persecuted prophets Jeremiah is the most eminent; *i. e.* we know more of his history, of his imprisonments, his wanderings, and his afflictions. He may be taken as a representative of the prophets; and hence it is that he is an especial type of our LORD and SAVIOUR. All the prophets were types of the Great Prophet whose way they were preparing; they tended towards and spoke of CHRIST. In their sufferings they foreshadowed His priesthood, and in their teaching His prophetic office, and in their miracles His royal power. The history of Jeremiah, then, as being drawn out in Scripture more circumstantially than that of the other prophets, is the most exact type of CHRIST among them; that is, next to David, who, of course, was the nearest resemblance to HIM of all, as a sufferer, an inspired teacher, and a king. Jeremiah comes next to David; I do not say in dignity and privilege, for it was Elijah who was taken up to heaven, and appeared at the Transfiguration; nor in inspiration, for to Isaiah one should assign the higher evangelical gifts; but in typifying HIM who came and wept over Jerusalem, and then was tortured and put to death by those HE wept over. And hence, when our LORD came, while some thought HIM Elijah, and others John the Baptist,

² Heb. xi. 36—38.

³ Matt. xxiii. 35.

risen from the dead, there were others who thought Him Jeremiah. Of Jeremiah, then, I will now speak, as a specimen of all those prophets whom St. Paul sets before us as examples of faith, and St. James of patience.

Jeremiah's ministry may be summed up in three words, good hope, labour, disappointment.

It was his privilege to be called to his sacred office from his earliest years. Like Samuel, the first prophet, he was of the tribe of Levi, dedicated from his birth to religious services, and favoured with the constant presence and grace of God. "Before I formed thee . . . I knew thee⁴," says the word of the Lord to him when He gave him his commission, "and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." This commission was given the year after Josiah began his reformation. Jeremiah returned for answer, "Ah! LORD GOD! behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child." He felt the arduousness of a prophet's office; the firmness and intrepidity which were required to speak the words of God. "But the LORD said unto him, Say not I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and said unto me, Behold I have put My words in thy mouth."

No prophet commenced his labours with greater encouragement than Jeremiah. A king had succeeded to the throne who was bringing back the times of the man after God's own heart. There had not been a son of David so zealous as Josiah since David himself. The king, too, was young, at most twenty years of age in the beginning of his reformation. What might not be effected in a course of years, however corrupt and degraded was the existing state of his people? So Jeremiah might think. It must be recollected, too, that religious obedience was under the Jewish covenant awarded with temporal prosperity. There seemed, then, every reason for Jeremiah at first to suppose that bright fortunes were in store for the Church. Josiah was the very king whose birth was foretold by name above three hundred years before,

⁴ Jer. i. 5. .

when Jeroboam established idolatry; who was the promised avenger of God's covenant, "the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in ⁵." Israel (the ten tribes) having gone into captivity, schism had come to its end; the kings of the house of David again ruled over the whole extent of the promised land; idolatry was destroyed by Josiah in all the cities. Such were the present blessings which the Jewish remnant enjoyed. At first sight, then, it seemed reasonable to anticipate further and permanent improvement. Every one begins with being sanguine; doubtless then, as now, many labourers in God's husbandry entered on their office with more lively hopes than their after fortunes warranted. Whether or not, however, such hope of success encouraged Jeremiah's first exertions, very soon, in his case, this cheerful prospect was overcast, and he was left to labour in the dark. Huldah's message to the king, on his finding the book of the law in the temple, fixed the coming fortunes of Judah. Huldah foretold a woe,—an early removal of the good Josiah to his rest as a mercy to him, and to the nation, who were unworthy of him, a fierce destruction. This prophecy was delivered five years after Jeremiah entered into his office; he ministered in all forty years before the captivity; so early in his course were his hopes cut away.

But even though Huldah's message be supposed not to reach him, still he was doubtless soon undeceived as to any hopes he might entertain, whether, by the express Word of God informing him, or by the actual hardened state of sin in which the nation lay. Soon, surely, were his hopes destroyed, and his mind sobered into a more blessed and noble temper,—resignation.

I call resignation a more blessed frame of mind than sanguine hope of present success, because it is the truer, and the more consistent with our fallen state of being, and the more improving to our hearts; and because it is that for which the most eminent servants of God have been conspicuous. To expect great effects from our exertions for religious objects is natural indeed, and innocent, but it arises from inexperience of the kind of work we have to do,—to change the hearts and will of man. It is a far

⁵ Isaiah lviii. 12.

nobler frame of mind, to labour, not with the hope of, seeing the fruit of our labour, but for conscience-sake, as a matter of duty; and again, in faith, trusting good *will* be done, though we see it not. Look through the Bible, and you will find God's servants, even though they began with success, end with disappointment; not that God's purposes or His instruments fail, but that the time for reaping what we have sown is hereafter, not here; that here there is no great visible fruit in any one man's lifetime. Moses, for instance, began with leading the Israelites out of Egypt in triumph; he ended at the age of 120 years, before his journey was finished, and Canaan gained, one among the offending multitudes who were overthrown in the wilderness⁶. Samuel's reformatations ended in the people's wilfully choosing a king like the nations around them. Elijah, after his successes, fled from Jezebel into the wilderness to mourn over his disappointments. Isaiah, after Hezekiah's religious reign, and the miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's army, fell upon the evil days of his son Manasseh. Even in the successes of the first Christian teachers, the Apostles, the same rule is observed. After all the great works, God enabled them to accomplish, they confessed before their death that what they experienced, and what they saw before them, was reverse and calamity, and that the fruit of their labour would not be seen, till CHRIST came to open the books and collect His saints from the four corners of the earth. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived⁷," is the testimony of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John, and St. Jude.

Now, in the instance of Jeremiah, we have on record that variety and vicissitude of feelings, which this transition from hope to disappointment produces, at least in a sensitive mind. His trials were very great, even in Josiah's reign; but when that pious king's countenance was withdrawn on his early death, he was exposed to persecution from every class of men. At one time we read of the people conspiring against him⁸; at another, of the men of his own city, Anathoth, "seeking his life⁹," on account of his prophesying in the LORD's name. At another

⁶ 1 Cor. x. 5.

⁷ 2 Tim. iii. 13.

⁸ Jer. xviii. 18.

⁹ Ibid. xi. 21.

time, he was seized by the priests and the prophets in order to be put to death, from which he was only saved by certain of the princes and elders who were still faithful to the memory of Josiah¹. Then, again, Pashur, the chief governor of the temple, smote him and tortured him². At another time, the king, Zedekiah, put him in prison³. Afterwards, when the army of the Chaldeans had besieged Jerusalem, the Jews accused him of falling away to the enemy⁴, and smote him, and imprisoned him; then they cast him into a dungeon, where he “sunk in the mire,” and almost perished from hunger⁵. When Jerusalem had been taken by the enemy, Jeremiah was forcibly carried down to Egypt by men who at first pretended to reverence and consult him⁶, and there he came to his end—it is believed, a violent end. Nebuchadnezzar, the heathen king of Babylon and conqueror of Jerusalem, was one of the few persons who showed him kindness. This great king, who afterwards honoured Daniel, and was at length brought to acknowledge the God of Heaven by a severe chastisement, on the taking of the city delivered Jeremiah from prison⁷, and gave charge to the captain of his guard concerning him, to “look well to him, and to do him no harm; but to do unto him even as he should say” An Ethiopian, another heathen, is also mentioned as delivering him from the dungeon.

Such were his trials: his affliction, fear, despondency, and sometimes even restlessness under them are variously expressed; that succession and tide of feelings which most persons undergo before their minds settle into the calm of resignation. At one time he speaks as astonished at his failure,—“O LORD, art not Thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction⁸.” Again, “a wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so⁹.” At another time, he expresses his perplexity at the disorder of the world, and the successes of the wicked; “Righteous art THOU, O LORD, when I plead with THEE; yet let me talk with THEE of Thy judgments: wherefore

¹ Jer. xxvi. 16, &c.² Ibid. xx. 2.³ Ibid. xxxii. 3.⁴ Ibid. xxxvii. 14.⁵ Ibid. xxxviii. 6. 9.⁶ Ibid. xlii. xliii.⁷ Ibid. xxxix. 14.⁸ Ibid. v. 3.⁹ Ibid. v. 30, 31.

doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? . . . but THOU, O LORD, knowest me; THOU hast seen me, and tried mine heart towards THEE¹." Then in turn, his mind frets at the thought of its own anxious labours and perplexities; "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth. I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me. . . . Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable? . . . wilt THOU be altogether unto me as a deceiver, and as waters that fail?" These are the sorrows of a gentle and peaceable mind, forced against its will into the troubles of life, and incurring the hatred of those whom it opposes against its nature. This he elsewhere expresses thus, "As for me, I have not . . . desired the woeful day" (which he foretold); "THOU knowest that which came out of my lips, was right before THEE. Be not a terror unto me, THOU art my hope in the day of evil²." When Pashur put him to torture he was still more agitated, and said, "O LORD, THOU hast deceived me, and I was deceived. THOU art stronger than I, and hast prevailed. I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. . . . Cursed be the day wherein I was born³" (here certainly is the language even of impatience), "let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed."

However, of such changes of feelings what was the end? resignation. He elsewhere uses language, which expresses that chastened spirit and weaned heart, which is the termination of all agitation and anxiety in the case of religious minds. He, who at one time could not comfort himself, at another was sent to comfort a brother; and in comforting Baruch, he speaks in that nobler temper of resignation, which takes the place of sanguine hope and harassing fear, and betokens calm and clear-sighted faith and inward peace. "Thus saith the LORD the God of Israel unto thee, O Baruch. Thou didst say, Woe is me now, for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest . . . Behold that which I have built, will I break down, and that which I have planted

¹ Jer. xii. 1—3.

² Jer. xv. 10—18.

³ Jer. xvii. 16, 17.

⁴ Jer. xx. 7—14.

I will pluck up, even this whole land. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not, for behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh; . . . but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places, whither thou goest;" that is, seek not success, be not impatient, fret not thyself, be content, if, after all thy labours, thou dost but save thyself, without seeing other fruit of them.

And now, my brethren, does what I have been saying apply to all of us; or only to Prophets? It applies to all of us. For all of us live in a world which promises well, but does not fulfil, and all of us (taking our lives altogether apart from religious prospects), begin with hope, and end with disappointment. Doubtless, there is much difference in our respective trials here, arising from difference of tempers and fortunes. Still it is in our nature to begin life thoughtlessly and joyously; to seek great things in one way or other; to have vague notions of good to come; to love the world, and to believe its promises, and seek satisfaction and happiness from it. And, as it is our nature to hope, so it is our lot, as life proceeds, to encounter disappointment. I know that there are multitudes in the retired ranks of society, who pass their days without any great varieties of fortune; though even in such cases, thinking persons will have much more to say of themselves than at first sight might appear. Still, that disappointment in some shape or other is the lot of man, (that is, looking at our prospects apart from the next world,) is plain, from the mere fact, if nothing else could be said, that we begin life with health and end it with sickness; or in other words, that it *comes* to an *end*, for an end is a failure. And even in the quietest walks of life, do not the old feel regret, more or less vividly, that they are not young? Do not they lament the days gone by, and even with the pleasure of remembrance feel the pain? And why, except that they think that they have lost something, which they once had, whereas in the beginning of life, they thought of gaining something they had not? a double disappointment.

Now is it religion that suggests this sad view of things? No, it is experience; it is the *world's* doing; it is fact, from which we cannot escape, though the Bible said not a word about the perishing nature of all earthly pleasures.

Here then it is, that God HIMSELF offers us His aid by His

word, and in His Church. Left to ourselves, we seek good from the world, but cannot find it; in youth we look forward, and in age we look back. It is well we should be persuaded of these things betimes, to gain wisdom and to provide for the evil day. Seek we great things? We must seek them where they really are to be found, and in the way in which they are to be found; we must seek them, as He has set them before us, who came into the world to enable us to gain them. We must be willing to give up present hope for future enjoyment, this world for the unseen. The truth is (though it is so difficult for us to admit it heartily), our nature is not at first in a state to enjoy happiness, even if we had it offered to us. We seek for it, and we feel we need it; but (strange though it is to say, still so it is,) we are not fitted to be happy. If then at once we rush forward to seek enjoyment, it will be like a child's attempting to walk before his strength is come. If we would gain true bliss, we must cease to seek it as an end; we must postpone the prospect of enjoying it. For we are by nature in an unnatural state; we must be changed from what we are when born, before we can receive our greatest good. And as in sickness sharp remedies are often used, or irksome treatment, so it is with our souls; we must go through pain, we must practise self-denial, we must curb our wills, and purify our hearts, before we are capable of any lasting solid peace. To attempt to gain happiness, except in this apparently tedious and circuitous way, is a labour lost; it is building on the sand; the foundation will soon give way, though the house looks fair for a time. To be gay and thoughtless, to be self-indulgent and self-willed, is quite out of character with our real state. We must learn to know ourselves, and to have thoughts and feelings becoming ourselves. Impetuous hope and undisciplined mirth ill-suit a sinner. Should he shrink from low notions of himself, and sharp pain and mortification of natural wishes, whose guilt called down the Son of God from heaven to die upon the cross for him? May he live in pleasure here, and call this world his home, while he reads in the Gospel of his SAVIOUR's life-long affliction and disappointment?

It cannot be; let us prepare for suffering and disappointment, which befit us as sinners, and which are necessary for us as saints. Let us not turn away from trial when God brings it on us, or play

the coward in the fight of faith. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong⁵;" such is St. Paul's exhortation. When affliction overtakes you, remember to accept it as a means of improving your hearts, and pray God for His grace that it may do so. Look disappointment in the face. "Take . . . the Prophets . . . for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy who endure." Give not over your attempts to serve God, though you see nothing come of them. Watch and pray, and obey your conscience, though you cannot perceive your own progress in holiness. Go on, and you cannot but go forward; believe it, though you do not see it. Do the duties of your calling, though they are distasteful to you. Educate your children carefully in the good way, though you cannot tell how far God's grace has touched their hearts. Let your light shine before men, and praise God in a consistent life, even though others do not seem to glorify their FATHER on account of it, or to be benefited by your example. "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you shall find it after many days. . . . In the morning sow your seed, in the evening withhold not your hand; for you know not whether shall prosper, either this or that; or whether they both shall be alike good⁶." Persevere in the narrow way. The Prophets went through sufferings to which ours are mere trifles; violence and craft combined to turn them aside, but they kept right on, and are at rest.

Now, I know full well, that this whole subject is distasteful to many men, who say we ought to be cheerful. "We are bid rejoice, why then do you bid us mourn?" I bid you mourn in order that you may rejoice more perfectly. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted⁷." "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy." I bid you take up the cross of CHRIST, that you may wear His crown. Give your hearts to HIM, and you will for yourselves solve the difficulty, how Christians can be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing⁸. You will find that lightness of heart and cheerfulness are quite consistent with that new and heavenly character which HE gives us, though to gain it in any

⁵ 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

⁶ Eccl. xi. 1. 6.

⁷ Matt. v. 4.

⁸ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

good measure, we must for a time be sorrowful, and ever after thoughtful. But I give you fair warning, you must at first take His word on trust; and if you do not, there is no help for it. He says, "Come unto Me, . . . and I will give you rest." You must begin on faith; you cannot see at first whither He is leading you, and how light will rise out of the darkness. You must begin by denying yourselves your natural wishes,—a painful work; by refraining from sin, by rousing from sloth, by preserving your tongue from insincere words, and your hands from deceitful dealings, and your eyes from beholding vanity; by watching against the first rising of anger, pride, impurity, obstinacy, jealousy; by learning to endure the laugh of irreligious men for CHRIST's sake; by forcing your minds to follow seriously the words of prayer, though it be difficult to you, and by keeping before you the thought of God all through the day. These things you will be able to do, if you do but seek the mighty help of God the HOLY SPIRIT which is given you; and while you follow after them, then, in the Prophet's language, "your light shall rise in obscurity, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. And the LORD shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not⁹.

⁹ Isa. lviii. 10, 11.

SERMON CLVI.

ENDURANCE OF THE WORLD'S CENSURE.

EZEKIEL ii. 6.

“And thou, 'son 'of man, be not afraid of them; neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions; be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.”

WHAT is here implied, as the trial of the prophet Ezekiel, was fulfilled more or less in the case of all the prophets. They were not Teachers merely, but Confessors. They came not merely to unfold the Law, or to foretel the Gospel, but to warn and rebuke; nor to rebuke only, but to suffer. This world is a scene of conflict between good and evil. The evil not only avoids, but persecutes the good; the good cannot conquer, except by suffering. Good men seem to fail, their cause triumphs; their own overthrow is the price paid for the success of their cause. When was it that this conflict, and this character and issue of it, have not been fulfilled? So it was in the beginning. Cain, for instance, was envious of his brother Abel, and slew him. Enoch walked with God, and was a preacher of righteousness, and God took him. Ishmael mocked at Isaac; Esau was full of wrath with Jacob, and resolved to kill him. Joseph's brethren were filled with bitter hatred of him, debated about killing him, cast him into a pit, and at last sold him into Egypt. Afterwards, in like manner, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rose up against Moses.

And, later still, Saul persecuted David ; and Ahab and Jezebel, Elijah ; and the priests and the prophets the prophet Jeremiah. Lastly, not to dwell on other instances, the chief priests and Pharisees, full of envy, rose up against our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and delivered HIM to the heathen governor Pontius Pilate, to be crucified. So the Apostles, after HIM, and especially St. Paul, were persecuted by their fierce and revengeful countrymen ; and from the way St. Paul speaks on the subject we may infer that it is ever so to be : “ All that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS shall suffer persecution : ” or as he says, after referring to the history of Isaac and Ishmael, “ As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now : ” and indeed we see this fulfilled in its measure before our eyes even at this day. Hence our SAVIOUR, to console all who suffer for His sake, graciously says, “ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for their’s is the kingdom of heaven¹. ”

The case seems to be this :—those who do not serve GOD with a single heart, know they ought to do so, and they do not like to be reminded that they ought. And when they fall in with any one who does live to GOD, he serves to remind them of it, and that is unpleasant to them, and that is the first reason why they are angry with a religious man ; the sight of him disturbs them and makes them uneasy.

And, in the next place, they feel in their hearts that he is in much better case than they are. They cannot help wishing, though they are hardly conscious of their own wish, they cannot help wishing that they were like him ; yet they have no intention of imitating him, and this makes men jealous and envious. Instead of being angry with themselves, they are angry with him.

These are their first feelings : what follows ? next they are very much tempted to deny that he is religious. They wish to get the thought of him out of their minds. Nothing would so relieve their minds as to find that there were no religious persons in the world, none better than themselves. Accordingly, they do all they can to believe that he is making a pretence of reli-

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 12. Gal. iv. 29. Matt. v. 10.

gion; they do their utmost to find out what looks like inconsistency in him. They call him a hypocrite and other names. And all this, if the truth must be spoken, because they hate the things of God, and therefore they hate His servants.

Accordingly, as far as they have power to do it, they persecute him, either, as the text implies, with cruel untrue words, or with cold, or fierce, or jealous looks, or in some worse ways. A good man is an offence to a bad man. The sight of him is a sort of insult; and he is irritated at him, and does him what harm he can. Thus Christians, in former times, were put to death by the heathen. As righteous Abel by Cain, as our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD, by the Jews, as St. Paul too by the heathen; so, many after him were put to death also, and that by the most cruel torments. It would not be right to describe the horrible inflictions which the children of God once endured at the hands of the children of the flesh; but we have some allusion to what had taken place in an earlier age, in a passage from St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, from which you may judge of the more cruel trials which Christians afterwards endured. They "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned; they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy,) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth²."

Praised be God, we live in times when this cannot take place! Hitherto, at least, HE has guarded us in a wonderful way. If any bad man did any serious harm to a religious man, he knows he would incur some punishment from the law of the land. Religious persons are protected in this day from all great persecutions, and they cannot sufficiently be thankful for it. The utmost they can suffer from the world is light indeed compared with what men suffered of old time. Yet St. Paul calls even his and their sufferings "our light afflictions," and if their suffering was but light, compared with the glory which was to follow after death, much more is ours light, who cannot undergo persecution, if we

² Heb. xi. 36—38.

would, and at best can only suffer very slight inconveniences from serving God faithfully.

And yet, nevertheless, most true is it, that even now, no one can give his mind to God, and show by his actions that he fears God, but he will incur the dislike and opposition of the world, and it is important he should be aware of this, and be prepared for it. He must not mind it, he must bear it, and in time (if God so will) he will overcome it.

There are a number of lesser ways in which careless ungodly persons may annoy and inconvenience those who desire to do their duty humbly and fully. Such, especially, are those, which seem intended in the text, unkind censure, carping, slander, ridicule, cold looks, rude language, insult, and, in some cases, oppression and tyranny. Whoever, therefore, sets about a religious life, must be prepared for these,—must be thankful if they do not befall him; but must not be put out, must not think it a strange thing, if they do.

Now, my brethren, observe this; in bidding you endure reproach for CHRIST's sake, I am bidding you nothing which, as a minister of CHRIST, I do not wish to practise myself. Nay, it is what all ministers of CHRIST are obliged to practise; for, in all ages, *who* do you think it is that the world will first attack and oppose? CHRIST's ministers, of course. Who is there who can possibly so offend this bad world, as they whose very office is to remind the world of God and heaven? If all serious persons are disliked by the world, because they bring before them unpleasant truths, which they would fain forget if they could, this trial surely applies still more to those whose very profession and business it is to remind men of the truths of religion. A religious man does not intend to remind his neighbours; he goes on his own way; but they see him and cannot help being reminded. They see that he is well-conducted, and sober-minded, and reverent, and conscientious; that he never runs into any excess; that he never uses bad language; that he is regular at his prayers, regular at Church, regular at the most Holy Sacrament; they see all this, and, whether he will or no, they *are* reminded of their duty, and, as disliking to be reminded, they dislike him who reminds them. But if this be so in the case of common men, who wish to go on in a religious way

without making any profession, how do you think it will fare with us, CHRIST's ministers, whose very duty it is to make a profession? Every thing about a clergyman is, or ought to be, a warning to men of the next world, of death and judgment, heaven and hell. His very dress is a memento. He does not dress like other men. His habits are a memento. His mode of speech is graver than that of others. His duties too are a memento. He is seen in Church reading prayers, baptizing, preaching; or he is seen teaching children; he is seen in works of charity; or he is seen studying. His life is given to objects out of sight. All that he does is intended to remind men that time is short, death is certain, and eternity long. And, this being so, do you think that men, being as they mostly are, careless and irreligious, do you think they like this? No; and still less, when he goes on to tell men of their errors and faults, and, as far as he can, to restrain them. And so in all ages you will find that the world has resisted and done its utmost to get rid of the preachers of repentance and holiness. It would stone Moses, it cast Daniel into the den of lions, and the three children into the fiery furnace; St. Paul it beheaded, St. Peter it crucified, others it burnt, others it tortured even to death. And so it went on for many generations. But at last, as I said just now, religious persons have by degrees been sheltered by the law of the land from persecution, and CHRIST's ministers among them. And the world has got more humane and generous, if not more religious; and GOD is sovereign over all. But though the devil cannot persecute us, he does what he can to oppose us. Surely this is so; for no one can look into the many publications of the day, without having proof of it; no one can go into places where persons meet together for refreshment, or for recreation, without hearing it; no one can travel on the road, without at times being witness to it. CHRIST's ministers are called names, untruths are told of them, they are ridiculed; and men encourage each other to oppose them, and to deceive them. And why? for this simple short reason, because they are GOD's messengers; and men in general do not like to be told of GOD. They say that they could do well without ministers of CHRIST; which really means, that they wish to do without GOD in the world.

Such is the portion to which all we, ministers of CHRIST, are called by our profession; and therefore, when we bid you prepare for the opposition of the world, we are calling you to nothing which we do not bear ourselves. It were well, could we, in all things, do first what we bid *you* do. There is no temptation or trial which you have, which in its kind we may not have to endure, or at least would not wish to endure, so far as it is lawful to wish it. St. Paul said to certain heathens, "We also are men of like passions with you ³." St. Paul, and the Apostles, and all CHRIST's ministers after them, are of one nature with other men. They have to go through what other men go through. They suffer pain, sorrow, bereavement, anxiety, desolateness, privations; and they have need, as other men, of patience, cheerfulness, faith, hope, contentment, resignation, firmness, to bear all that comes on them well. But even more than other men are they called on to bear the opposition of the world. They have to bear being ridiculed, slandered, ill-treated, overreached, disliked. All this is not pleasant to them naturally, any more than to other people. But they find it must be so; they cannot alter it; and they learn resignation and patience. This patience and resignation then I exhort you to cherish, my brethren, when the world scorns you for your religion; and with all cheerfulness and meekness, that you may bear your cross lightly, and not gloomily, or sadly, or complainingly.

For instance, persons may press you to do something which you know to be wrong—to tell an untruth, or to do what is not quite honest, or to go to companies whither you should not go; and they may show that they are vexed at the notion of your not complying. Still you must not comply. You must not do what you feel to be wrong, though you should thereby displease even those whom you would most wish to please.

Again: you must not be surprised, should you find that you are called a hypocrite, and other hard names; you must not mind it.

Again: you may be jeered at and mocked by your acquaintance, for being strict and religious, for carefully coming to Church, keeping from bad language, and the like: you must not care for it.

³ Acts xiv. 15.

Again, you may, perhaps, discover to your great vexation, that untruths are told of you by careless persons behind your backs, that what you do has been misrepresented, and that in consequence a number of evil things are believed about you by the world at large. Hard though it be, you must not care for it; remembering that more untruths were told of our SAVIOUR and His Apostles than can possibly be told of you.

Again: you may find that not only the common run of men believe what is said against you, but even those with whom you wish to stand well. But if this happens through your conscientiousness you must not mind it, but must be cheerful, leaving your case in the hand of GOD, and knowing that HE will bring it out into the light one day or another, in His own good time.

Again: persons may try to threaten or frighten you into doing something wrong, but you must not mind that; you must be firm.

In many, very many ways you may be called upon to bear the ill-usage of the world, or to withstand its attempts to draw you from GOD; but you must be firm, and you must not be surprised that they should be made. You must consider that it is your very calling to bear and to withstand. This is what you offer to GOD as a sort of return for His great mercies to you. Did not CHRIST go through much more for you, than you can possibly be called upon to undergo for HIM? Did HE bear the bitter cross who was sinless, and do you who are at best so sinful, scruple to bear such poor trials and petty inconveniences?

In conclusion, I will but call your attention to two points, to which what I have said leads me.

First; Do not be too eager to suppose you are ill-treated for your religion's sake. Make as light of matters as you can. And beware of being severe on those who lead careless lives, or whom you think or know to be ill-treating you. Do not dwell on such matters. Turn your mind away from them. Avoid all gloominess. Be kind and gentle to those who are perverse, and you will very often, please GOD, gain them over. You should pray for those who lead careless lives, and especially if they are unkind to you. Who knows but GOD may hear your prayers, and turn their hearts, and bring them over to you? Do everything for them but imitate them and yield to them. This is the

true Christian spirit, to be meek and gentle under ill-usage, cheerful under slander, forgiving towards enemies, and silent in the midst of angry tongues.

Secondly, I would say, recollect you cannot do any one thing of all the duties I have been speaking of, without God's help. Any one who attempts to resist the world, or to do other good things by his own strength, will be sure to fall. We *can* do good things, but it is when God gives us power to do them. Therefore we must pray to HIM for the power. When we are brought into temptation of any kind, we should lift up our hearts to God. We should say to HIM, "Good LORD deliver us." Our LORD, when HE was going away, promised to His disciples a Comforter instead of HIMSELF; that was GOD the HOLY GHOST, who is still among us, (though we see HIM not,) as CHRIST was with the Apostles. HE has come in order to enlighten us, guide us in the right way, and in the end bring us to CHRIST in heaven. And He came down, as His name "Comforter" shows, especially to stand by, and comfort, and strengthen those who are in any trouble, particularly trouble from irreligious men. The disciples, when CHRIST went, had to go through much trouble, and therefore HE comforted them by the coming of the Holy and Eternal SPIRIT, the Third Person in the Blessed Trinity. "These things I have spoken unto you," HE says, "that in ME ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world⁴." When, then, religious persons are in low spirits, or are any way grieved at the difficulties which the world puts in their way, when they earnestly desire to do their duty, yet feel how weak they are, let them recollect that they are "not their own," but "bought with a price," and the dwelling-places and temples of the All-gracious SPIRIT.

Lastly; I am quite sure that none of us, even the best, have resisted the world as we ought to have done. Our faces have not been like flints; we have been afraid of their words, and dismayed at their looks, and we have yielded at times to the world against our better judgment. We have fancied, forsooth, it could do us some harm while we kept to the commandments of God. Let us search our consciences; let us look back on our past lives. Let

⁴ John xvi. 33.

us try to purify and cleanse our hearts in God's sight. Let us try to live more like Christians, more like children of God. Let us earnestly beg of God to teach us more simply and clearly what our duty is. Let us beg of HIM to give us the heart to love HIM, and true repentance for what is past. Let us beg HIM to teach us *how* to confess HIM before men, lest if we deny HIM now, HE will deny us before the angels of God hereafter.

S E R M O N C L V I I .

DOING GLORY TO GOD IN PURSUITS OF THE WORLD.

1 COR. x. 31.

“ Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

WHEN persons are convinced that life is short, that it is unequal to any great purpose, that it does not display adequately, or bring to perfection the true Christian, when they feel that the next life is all in all, and that eternity is the only subject that really can claim or can fill their thoughts, then they are apt to undervalue this life altogether, and to forget its real importance. They are apt to wish to spend the time of their sojourning here in a positive separation from active and social duties: yet it should be recollected that the employments of this world, though not themselves heavenly, are, after all, the way to heaven—though not the fruit, are the seed of immortality—and are valuable, though not in themselves, yet for that to which they lead: but it is difficult to realize this. It is difficult to realize both truths at once, and to connect both truths together; steadily to contemplate the life to come, yet to act in this. Those who meditate, are likely to neglect those active duties which are, in fact, incumbent on them, and to dwell upon the thought of God’s glory, till they forget to act to His glory. This state of mind is chided in figure in the words of the holy angels to the Apostles, when they say, “ Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ¹ ?”

In various ways does the thought of the next world lead men

¹ Acts i. 11.

to neglect their duty in this; and whenever it does so we may be sure that there is something wrong and unchristian, not in their thinking of the next world, but in their manner of thinking of it. For though the contemplation of God's glory may in certain times and persons allowably interfere with the active employments of life, as in the case of the Apostles when our SAVIOUR ascended, and though such contemplation is even freely allowed or commanded us at certain times of each day; yet that is not a real and true meditation on CHRIST, but some counterfeit, which makes us dream away our time, or become habitually indolent, or which withdraws us from our existing duties, or unsettles us.

Yet the thought of the world unseen is apt to do so in various ways, and the worst way of all is when we have taken up a notion that it *ought* to do so. And indeed this is a temptation to which persons who desire to be religious are exposed in one shape or another in every age, and in this age as well as in times past. Men come to fancy that to lose taste and patience for the businesses of this life is renouncing the world and becoming spiritually-minded. We will say a person has been thoughtless and irreligious; perhaps openly so; or at least careless about religion, and though innocent of any flagrant sin, yet a follower of his own will and fancy, and unpractised in any regular and consistent course of religion. He has, perhaps, been outwardly respectful to sacred things and persons, but has had no serious thoughts about the next world. He has taken good and evil—religion and the world—as they came, first one and then the other, without much consideration. He has been fond of gaiety and amusements, or he has been deeply interested in some pursuit or other of time and sense,—whether it be his own trade or profession, or some of the studies and employments now popular. He has fallen in with the ways of the company in which he has found himself; has been profane with the profane; then, again, has had for a season religious impressions, which in turn have worn away. Thus he has lived, and something has then occurred really to rouse him and give him what is called a serious turn. Such a person, man or woman, young or old, certainly does need to take a serious turn, does require a change; and no one but must be very glad to hear that a change has taken place, though at the same time there may be changes not much better than

that which happened to him, whose soul, in our LORD's language, was but "swept and garnished;" not really changed in a heavenly way, and having but the semblance of faith and holiness upon it.

Now the cases I am speaking of are somewhat like that which our SAVIOUR seems to speak of in the passage referred to. When a man has been roused to serious resolutions, the chances are, that he fails to take up with the one and only narrow way which leads to life. The chances are that "then cometh the wicked one," and persuades him to choose some path short of the true one—easier and pleasanter than it. And *this* is the kind of course to which he is often seduced, as we frequently witness it; viz. to feel a sort of dislike and contempt for his ordinary worldly business as something beneath him. He knows he must have what Scripture calls a spiritual mind, and he fancies that to have a spiritual mind it is absolutely necessary to renounce all earnestness or activity in his worldly employments, to profess to take no interest in them, to despise the natural and ordinary pleasures of life, violating the customs of society, adopting a melancholy air and a sad tone of voice, and remaining silent and absent when among his natural friends and relatives, as if saying to himself, "I have much higher thoughts than to engage in all these perishing miserable things;" acting with constraint and difficulty in the things about him; making efforts to turn things which occur to the purpose of what he considers spiritual reflections; using certain Scripture phrases and expressions; delighting to exchange Scripture sentiments with persons whom he meets of his own way of thinking; nay, making visible and audible signs of deep feeling when Scripture or other religious subjects are mentioned, and the like. He thinks he lives out of the world, and out of its engagements, if he shuts (as it were) his eyes, and sits down doing nothing. Altogether he looks upon his worldly occupation simply as a burden and a cross, and considers it all gain to be able to throw it off; and the sooner he can release himself from it, and the oftener, so much the better.

Now I am far from denying that a man's worldly occupation *may* be his cross. Again, I am far from denying that under circumstances it may be right even to retire from the world. But I am speaking of cases when it is a person's duty to remain in his worldly calling, and when he does remain in it, but when he

cherishes dissatisfaction with it : whereas what he ought to feel is this,—that *while* in it he is to glorify God, not *out* of it, but *in* it, and *by means* of it, according to the Apostle's direction, “not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the LORD.” The LORD JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOUR is best served, and with the most fervent spirit, when men are not slothful in business, but do their duty in that state of life in which it has pleased God to call them.

Now what leads such a person into this mistake is, that he sees that most men who engage cheerfully and diligently in worldly business, do so from a worldly spirit, from a low carnal love of the world ; and so he thinks it is *his* duty, on the contrary, *not* to take a cheerful part in the world's business at all. And it cannot be denied that the greater part of the world is *absorbed* in the world ; so much so that I am almost afraid to speak of the duty of being active in our worldly business, lest I should seem to give countenance to that miserable devotion to the things of time and sense, that love of bustle and management, that desire of gain, and that aiming at influence and importance, which abound on all hands. Bad as it is to be languid and indifferent in our secular duties, and to account this religion, yet it is far worse to be the slaves of this world, and to have our hearts in the concerns of this world. I do not know any thing more dreadful than a state of mind which is, perhaps, the characteristic of this country, and which the prosperity of this country so miserably fosters. I mean that ambitious spirit, to use a great word, but I know no other word to express my meaning—that low ambition which sets every one on the look-out to succeed and to rise in life, to amass money, to gain power, to depress his rivals, to triumph over his hitherto superiors, to affect a consequence and a gentility which he had not before, to affect to have an opinion on high subjects, to pretend to form a judgment upon sacred things, to choose his religion, to approve and condemn according to his taste, to become a partizan in extensive measures for the supposed temporal benefit of the community, to indulge the vision of great things which are to come, great improvements, great wonders : all things vast, all things new,—this most fearfully earthly and grovelling spirit is likely, alas ! to extend itself more and more among our countrymen,—an intense, sleepless, restless,

never-wearied, never-satisfied, pursuit of Mammon in one shape or other, to the exclusion of all deep, all holy, all calm, all reverent thoughts. *This* is the spirit in which, more or less, (according to their different tempers) men do commonly engage in concerns of this world; and I repeat it, better, far better, were it to retire from the world altogether than thus to engage in it—better with Elijah to fly to the desert, than serve Baal and Ashtoreth in Jerusalem.

But the persons I speak of, as despising this world, are far removed from the spirit of Elijah. To flee from the world, or strenuously to resist it, implies an energy and strength of mind which they have not. They do neither one thing nor the other; they neither flee it, nor engage zealously in its concerns; but they remain in the midst of them, doing them in an indolent and negligent way, and think this is to be spiritually minded; or, as in other cases, they really take an interest in them, and yet speak as if they despised them.

But surely it is possible to “serve the LORD,” yet not to be “slothful in business;” not over devoted to it, but not to retire from it. We may do *all things* whatever we are about to God’s glory; we may do all things *heartily*, as to the LORD, and not to man, being both active yet meditative: and now let me give some instances to show what I mean.

1. “Do all to the glory of God,” says St. Paul, in the text; nay, “whether we eat or drink;” so that nothing is too slight or trivial to glorify Him in. We will suppose then, to take the case mentioned just now; we will suppose a man who has lately had more serious thoughts than he had before, and determines to live more religiously. In consequence of the turn his mind has taken he feels a distaste for his worldly occupation, whether he is in trade, or in any mechanical employment which allows little exercise of mind. He now feels he would rather be in some other business, though in itself his present occupation is quite lawful and pleasing to God. The ill-instructed man will at once get impatient and quit it; or if he does not quit it, at least he will be negligent and indolent in it. But the true penitent will say to himself, “No; if it be an irksome employment, so much the more does it suit *me*. I deserve no better. I do not deserve to be fed even with husks. I am

bound to afflict my soul for my past sins. If I were to go in sackcloth and ashes, if I were to live on bread and water, if I were to wash the feet of the poor day by day, it would not be too great an humiliation ; and the only reason I do not, is, that I have no call that way, it would look ostentatious. Gladly then will I hail an inconvenience which will try me without any one's knowing it. Far from repining, I will, through God's grace, go cheerfully about what I do not like. I will deny myself. I know that with His help what is in itself painful, will thus be pleasant as done towards HIM. I know well that there is no pain but may be borne comfortably, by the thought of HIM, and by His grace, and the strong determination of the will ; nay, but may soothe and solace me. Even the natural taste and smell may be made to like what they naturally dislike ; even bitter medicine, which is nauseous to the palate, may by a resolute will become tolerable. Nay, even sufferings and torture, such as martyrs have borne, have before now been rejoiced in and embraced heartily from love to CHRIST. I then, a sinner, will take this light inconvenience in a generous way, pleased at the opportunity of disciplining myself, and with self-abasement, as needing a severe penitence. If there be parts in my occupation which I especially dislike, if it requires a good deal of moving about and I wish to be at home, or if it be sedentary and I wish to be in motion, or if it requires rising early and I like to rise late, or if it makes me solitary and I like to be with friends, all this unpleasant part, as far as is consistent with my health, and so that it is not likely to be a snare to me, I will choose by preference. Again, I see my religious views are a hindrance to me. I see persons are suspicious of me. I see that I offend people by my scrupulousness. I see that to get on in life requires far more devotion to my worldly business than I can give consistently with my duty to God, or without its becoming a temptation to me. I know that I ought not, and (please God) I will not, sacrifice my religion to it. My religious seasons and hours shall be my own. I will not countenance any of the worldly dealings and practices, the over-reaching ways, the sordid actions in which others indulge. And if I am thrown back in life thereby, if I make less gains or lose friends, and so come to be despised, and find others rise in the world while I remain where I was, hard though this

be to bear, it is an humiliation which becomes me in requital for my sins, and in obedience to GOD ; and a very slight one it is, merely to be deprived of worldly successes, or rather it is a gain. And this may be the manner in which ALMIGHTY GOD will make an opening for me, if it is His blessed will to leave my present occupation. But leave it without a call from God, I certainly must not. On the contrary, I will work in it the more diligently, as far as higher duties allow me.

2. A second reason which will animate the Christian will be a desire of letting his light shine before men. He will aim at winning others by his own diligence and activity. He will say to himself, "My parents" or "my master" or "employer shall never say of me, Religion has spoiled him. They shall see me more active and alive than before. I will be punctual and attentive, and adorn the Gospel of GOD our SAVIOUR. My companions shall never have occasion to laugh at any affectation of religious feeling in me. No; I will affect nothing. In a manly way I will, with GOD's blessing, do my duty. I will not, as far as I can help, dishonour His service by any strangeness or extravagance of conduct, any unreality of words, any over-softness or constraint of manner; but they shall see that the fear of GOD only makes those who cherish it more respectable in the world's eyes as well as more heavenly-minded. What a blessed return it will be for GOD's mercies to me, if I, who am like a brand plucked out of the burning, be allowed, through His great mercy, to recommend that Gospel to others which HE has revealed to me, and to recommend it, as on the one hand by my strictness in attending GOD's ordinances, in discountenancing vice and folly, and by a conscientious walk; so, on the other hand, by all that is of good report in social life, by uprightness, honesty, prudence, and straightforwardness, by good temper, good-nature, and brotherly love!"

3. Thankfulness to ALMIGHTY GOD, nay, and the inward life of the SPIRIT itself, will be additional principles causing the Christian to labour diligently in his calling. He will see GOD in all things. He will recollect our SAVIOUR's life. CHRIST was brought up to a humble trade. When he labours in his own, he will think of his LORD and MASTER in His. He will recollect that CHRIST went down to Nazareth and was subject to His

parents, that HE walked long journeys, that HE bore the sun's heat and the storm, and had not where to lay His head. Again, he knows that the Apostles had various employments of this world before their calling; St. Andrew and St. Peter fishers, St. Matthew a tax-gatherer, and St. Paul, after his calling, still a tent maker. Accordingly, in whatever comes upon him, he will endeavour to discern and gaze (as it were) on the countenance of his SAVIOUR. He will feel that the true contemplation of that SAVIOUR lies *in* his worldly business; that as CHRIST is seen in the poor, and in the persecuted, and in children, so is HE seen in the employments which HE puts upon His chosen, whatever they be; that in attending to his own calling he will meet CHRIST; that if he neglect it, he will not on that account enjoy His presence at all the more, but that while performing it, he will see CHRIST revealed to his soul amid the ordinary actions of the day, as by a sort of sacrament. Thus he will take his worldly business as a gift from HIM, and will love it as such.

4. True humility is another principle which will lead us to desire to glorify God in our worldly employments if possible, instead of resigning them. CHRIST evidently puts His greater blessings on those whom the world despises. HE has bid His followers take the lowest seat. HE says that he who would be great must be as the servant of all, that he who humbleth himself shall be exalted; and HE HIMSELF washed His disciples' feet. Nay, HE tells us, that HE will gird HIMSELF, and serve them who have watched for HIM; an astonishing condescension, which makes us almost dumb with fear and rejoicing. All this has its effect upon the Christian, and he sets about his business with alacrity, and without a moment's delay, delighting to humble himself, and to have the opportunity of putting himself in that condition of life which our LORD especially blest.

5. Still further, he will use his worldly business as a means of keeping him from vain and unprofitable thoughts. One cause of the heart's devising evil is, that time is given it to do so. The man who has his daily duties, who lays out his time for them hour by hour, is saved a multitude of sins which have not time to get hold upon him. The brooding over insults received, or the longing after some good not granted, or regret at losses which have befallen us, or at the loss of friends by death, or the

attacks of impure and shameful thoughts, these are kept off from him who takes care to be diligent and well employed. Leisure is the occasion of all evil. Idleness is the first step in the downward path which leads to hell. If we do not find employment to engage our minds with, Satan will be sure to find his own employment for them. Here we see the difference of motive with which a religious and a worldly-minded man may do the same thing. Suppose a person has had some sad affliction, say a bereavement: men of this world, having no pleasure in religion, not liking to dwell on a loss to them irreparable, in order to drown reflection, betake themselves to worldly pursuits to divert their thoughts and banish gloom. The Christian under the same circumstances does the same thing; but it is from a fear lest he should relax and enfeeble his mind by barren sorrow; from a dread of becoming discontented; from a belief that he is pleasing God better, and is likely to secure his peace more fully, by not losing time; from a feeling that, far from forgetting those whom he has lost by thus acting, he shall only enjoy the thought of them the more really and the more religiously.

6. Lastly, we see what judgment to give in a question sometimes agitated, whether one should retire from our worldly business at the close of life, to give our thoughts more entirely to God. To wish to do so is so natural, that I suppose there is no one who would not wish it. A great many persons are not allowed the privilege, a great many are allowed it through increasing infirmities or extreme old age; but every one, I conceive, if allowed to choose, would think it a privilege to be allowed it, though a great many would find it difficult to determine *when* was the fit time. But let us consider what is the reason of this so natural a wish. I fear that it is often not a religious wish, often only partially religious. I fear a great number of persons who aim at retiring from the world's business, do so under the notion of their then enjoying themselves somewhat after the manner of the rich man in the Gospel, who said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." If this is the predominant aim of any one, of course I need not say that it is a fatal sin, for CHRIST HIMSELF has said so. Others there are who are actuated by a mixed feeling; they are aware that they do not give so much time to religion as they ought; they do not live by

rule; nay, they are not satisfied with the correctness or uprightness of some of the practices or customs which their way of life requires of them, and they get tired of active business as life goes on, and wish to be at ease. So they look to their last years as a time of retirement, in which they may *both* enjoy themselves *and* prepare for heaven. And thus they satisfy both their conscience and their love of the world. At present religion is irksome to them; but then, as they hope, duty and pleasure will go together. Now, putting aside all other mistakes which such a frame of mind evidences, let it be observed, that if they are at present *not* serving God with all their hearts, but look forward to a time when they shall do so, then it is plain that, when at length they *do* put aside worldly cares and turn to God, if ever they do, that time must necessarily be a time of deep humiliation, if it is to be acceptable to HIM, not a comfortable retirement. Who ever heard of a pleasurable, easy, joyous repentance? It is a contradiction in terms. These men, if they do but reflect a moment, must confess that their present mode of life, if it be not so strict as it should be, is heaping up tears and groans for their last years, not enjoyment. The longer they live as they do at present, not only the more unlikely is it that they will repent at all; but even if they do, the more bitter, the more painful must their repentance be. The only way to escape suffering for sin hereafter is to suffer for it here. Sorrow here or misery hereafter; they cannot escape one or the other.

Not for any worldly reason, then, not on any presumptuous or unbelieving motive, does the Christian desire leisure and retirement for his last years. Nay, he will be content to do without these blessings, and the highest Christian of all is he whose heart is so stayed on God, that he does not wish or need it; whose heart is so set on things above, that things below as little excite, agitate, unsettle, distress, and seduce him, as they stop the course of nature, as they stop the sun and moon, or change summer and winter. Such were the Apostles, who, as the heavenly bodies, went out "to all lands," and were full of business, yet full of sweet harmony, even to the ends of the earth. Their calling was heavenly, but their work was earthly; they were in labour and trouble till the last; yet consider how calmly St. Paul and St. Peter write in their last days. St. John, on the other hand, was

allowed, in a great measure, to retire from the cares of his pastoral charge, and such, I say, will be the natural wish of every religious man, whether his ministry be spiritual or secular; but, not in order to *begin* to fix his mind on GOD; but merely because, though he may contemplate GOD as truly and be as holy in heart in active business as in quiet, still it is more becoming and suitable to meet the stroke of death (if it be allowed us) silently, collectedly, solemnly, than in a crowd and a tumult. And hence it is, among other reasons, that we pray in the Litany to be delivered “from *sudden* death.”

On the whole, then, what I have said comes to this, that whereas Adam was sentenced to labour as a punishment, CHRIST has by His coming sanctified it as a means of grace and a sacrifice of thanksgiving, a sacrifice cheerfully to be offered up to the FATHER in His name.

It is very easy to speak and teach this, difficult to do it; very difficult to steer between the two evils,—to use this world as not abusing it, to be active and diligent in this world’s affairs, yet not for the world’s sake, but for GOD’s sake. It requires the greater effort for a minister of CHRIST to speak of it, for this reason; because he is not called upon in the same sense in which others are to practise the duty. He is not called, as the people are, to the professions, the pursuits, and cares of this world; his work is heavenly, and to it he gives himself wholly. It is a work which, we trust, will not carry him off from GOD; not only because it is His work, but, what is a more sure reason, because commonly it gains no great thanks from men. However, for this reason it is difficult for Christian ministers to speak about your trial in this matter, my brethren, because it is not theirs. We are tried by the command to live out of the world, and you by the command to live in it.

May GOD give us grace in our several spheres and stations to do His will and adorn His doctrine; that whether we eat and drink, or fast and pray, labour with our hands or with our minds, journey about or remain at rest, we may glorify HIM who has purchased us with His own blood!

S E R M O N C L V I I I .

VANITY OF HUMAN GLORY.

I JOHN iii. 1.

“ The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.”

OF St. Simon and St. Jude, the saints whom we this day commemorate, little is known¹. St. Jude, indeed, still lives in the Church in his Catholic epistle; but of his history we only know that he was brother to St. James the Less, and nearly related to our LORD; and that, like St. Peter, he had been a married man. Besides his name of Jude or Judas, he is also called Thaddæus and Lebbaeus in the Gospels. Of St. Simon, we only know that he was called the Canaanite, or Zealot, for the words have the same meaning, belonging, before his conversion, to a certain fierce sect, who, under the idea they were doing GOD service, took upon themselves to execute the law upon offenders without legal authority, and without formal accusation or trial. It is said that both Apostles were at length martyred in their efforts to gather together GOD's elect into His fold.

Little is known of St. Simon and St. Jude; they laboured and they taught in their generation; they were gifted with miraculous powers, and by their preaching founded churches and saved souls; they travelled into the East and West, till at last they were taken away from the earth. Yet we know little of their history now. Though “honoured in their generation, and were the glory of their

¹ Preached on the Festival of St. Simon and St. Jude.

times," yet they "have no memorial, but are perished as though they had never been." St. Jude's Epistle, indeed, is a standing monument, yet not of his doings, but of his gifts. What he wrote leads us to conjecture indeed what he was; but of his history, we know no more than of that of St. Simon.

And hence we draw an important lesson for ourselves, which, however obvious, is continually forgotten by us in the actual business of life; viz. to do our duty without aiming at the world's praise. Mankind knows nothing of St. Simon and St. Jude's deeds and sufferings, though these were great; yet there is ONE who "knows their works, and labour, and patience . . . and how they bore . . . and for His Name's sake laboured, and fainted not²." Their deeds are blotted out from history, but not from the LAMB's book of life; for "blessed are they who die in HIM, . . . that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them³."

On this great practical rule, viz. to do what we do heartily, as unto the LORD, and not unto men, I shall now make some remarks; and in doing so, I shall be pointing out a mode in which we may follow these blessed saints, whose lives at first sight seem to have left no pattern behind them for our imitation.

In heathen times, when men understood that they had souls, yet did not know what was the soul's true happiness, or how it was to be gained, much was thought, and more talked, of what they called *glory, fame, honour*. This was natural, as a little consideration will show. For before men begin to exercise their minds, while they remain ignorant and dull, the common pleasures of sense satisfy them—eating, drinking, and making merry. They do not think of the morrow. They have no end in view, and act on no plan. But when intelligence is awakened, and they learn to feel, reflect, hope, plan, and exert themselves; then mere animal indulgences are not enough for them, and they look about for some higher pleasures, more lasting and more refined. This is the real effect of that civilization which is so much extolled; it gives men refined wishes, and sets them on gratifying them. An enlightened age is one which feels the wants of human nature. Knowledge and mental cultivation render men alive to the things around them, busy, and restless; but they do no more than

¹ Ecclus. xlv. 7. 9.

² Rev. ii. 2, 3.

³ Ibid. xiv. 13.

make men sensible of their wants; they find no remedy for them; they bring no appropriate food to the hunger they create: for it is religion alone can do this.

Now the ancient heathen whom I speak of were just in this state; having minds cultivated and refined intellectually, they felt the capabilities of man for acting on a large field, and the need of some stimulus to make him act thus. They saw that human nature was capable of great things, and they perceived that some great goods must be attainable in some way or other, though they did not well know what they were. Feelings such as these, acting upon men in the tumult of life, with their passions awake, keenly set on (what are called) political objects, and averse to those self-denying habits which conscience (if listened to) would have suggested to be the way to that unknown happiness which their heart was imagining, led them to think of what they called glory and popularity as the greatest of goods, and that to which they ought especially to aspire.

Now what exactly they wished to signify by the word glory, is difficult to say, for they were apt to speak of it as if it were some real thing, and that, too, which one could possess and make one's own; yet, if we come to consider its real meaning, it plainly stands for nothing else than the praise of other men, the being admired, honoured, and feared; or, more commonly, having a celebrated *name*; that is, for a something external to ourselves. But whatever precise notions they wished to attach to the word, they used to talk in glowing language of the necessity of going through dangers and sufferings for glory's sake,—labouring to benefit the world for glory,—and dying for glory.

Now when we read of poor heathens using this language, it is our duty to pity them, for it is plain enough to any sober reasoner, that nothing is so vain as to talk of this glory being a real and substantial good; for there is no better ground for my being happy because my name is celebrated, than because any thing else is celebrated which, accidentally, and for a time, is connected with myself, and called mine. My name is my own only in the case of those who use it in speaking of me; *i. e.* of those who happen to see and know me. But when those who never saw me talk much of my name, they do me no more good or harm than if they celebrated any thing else which *I* may know to

be mine. They may praise a house that was once mine—that is not praising me; nor, in like manner, is it doing me any good, or honouring me, when those who never saw me use my name respectfully. It is a mere imagination, which can give no solid or lasting pleasure. There is some meaning and sense (though great wickedness) in coveting our neighbour's house or garden, horse or ass; the unjust steward, though a bad man, at least acted wisely, according *i. e.* to a worldly wisdom; but those who covet honour, I mean a great name, really covet no substantial thing at all, and are not only the most offending men alive, inasmuch as this passion for fame may carry them on to the most atrocious crimes, but also the most foolish of men.

Now, in the ancient heathen we may blame, but we must pity this sin, because it at least evidenced in them a knowledge of a great want of human nature, and was so far the sign of a higher state of mind than that of others who did not feel any wants at all, had no notion of any but selfish enjoyments, and were content to live and die like the brutes that perish. Their sin lay, not in being anxious for some good or other, which was not before their eyes, but in not consulting their own hearts on the subject, and going the way which their conscience told them. But, I say, they were heathens,—they had no Bible, no Church; and therefore we pity them; and by their errors are reminded to look to ourselves, and see how far we are clean from their sin.

Now it is a most melancholy fact, that Christians are chargeable, for all their light, with the same foolish irrational sin. This was not at first sight to be expected. This is a peculiar case. Observe; I do not say it is wonderful that we should seek the praise of persons we know. This I can understand. We all naturally love to be respected and admired, and in due limits perhaps we may be allowed to do so; the love of praise is capable of receiving a religious discipline and character. But the surprising thing is, that we should leave the thought of present goods, whether sensual enjoyments, or the more refined pleasure which the praise of our friends brings us, yet without going on to seek the good of the next world; that we should deny ourselves, yet not deny ourselves for a reality, but a shadow. It is natural, I say, to love to have deference and respect paid us by our acquaintance; but I am speaking of the desire of glory, that is, the praise of a vast

multitude of persons we never saw, or shall see, or care about ; and this, I say, is a depraved appetite, the artificial produce of a falsely enlightened intellect ; as unmeaning as it is sinful, or rather more sinful, because it is so very unmeaning ; excusable indeed in heathen, not only because they knew no better, but because they had no better good clearly proposed to them ; but in Christians, who have the favour of God and eternal life set before them, deeply criminal, turning away, as they do, from the bread of heaven, to feed upon ashes, with a deceived and corrupted imagination.

This love of indiscriminate praise, then, is an odious, superfluous, wanton sin, and we should put it away with a manly hatred, as something irrational and degrading. Shall man, born for high ends, the servant and son of God, the redeemed of CHRIST, the heir of immortality, go out of his way to have his mere name praised by a vast populace, or by various people, of whom he knows nothing, and most of whom (if he saw them) he would himself be the first to condemn ? It is odious ; yet young persons of high minds and vigorous powers, are especially liable to be led captive by this snare of the devil. If reasoning does not convince them, let facts,—the love of glory has its peculiar condemnation in its consequences. No sin has been so productive of wide-spread enduring ruin among mankind : wars and conquests are the means by which men have most reckoned on securing it. A tree is known by its fruit.

These remarks apply to the love of indiscriminate praise in all its shapes. Few persons, indeed, are in a condition to be tempted by the love of glory ; but all persons may be tempted to indulge in vanity, which is nothing else but the love of general admiration. A vain person is one who likes to be praised, whoever is the praiser, whether good or bad. Now consider, how few are not in their measure vain, till they reach that period of life when by course of nature vanity disappears ? Let all Christians carefully ask themselves, whether they are not very fond, not merely of the praise of their superiors and friends—this is right,—but of that of any person, any chance-comer, about whom they know nothing ? Who is not open to flattery ? and if he seems not to be exposed to it, is it not that he is too shrewd or too refined to be beguiled by any but what is delicate and unostentatious ? A

man never considers who it is who praises him. But the most dangerous, perhaps, of all kinds of vanity is to be vain of our personal appearance ; most dangerous, for such persons are ever under temptation—I may say, ever sinning. Wherever they go, they carry their snare with them ; and their idle love of admiration is gratified without effort by the very looks of those who gaze upon them.

Now I shall say something upon the natural and rational love of praise, and how far it may be safely indulged. As I have already said, it is *natural* to desire the esteem of all those with whom we have intercourse, all whom we love. Indeed, ALMIGHTY God intends us to do so. When we love a person, we cannot but wish he should love us ; but he cannot love us, without also feeling respect and esteem towards us. And as to the question, from whom we should desire praise, and how far, we have this simple rule—from all who stand to us in CHRIST'S place. CHRIST HIMSELF is our great Judge ; from HIM we must supremely seek praise ; and as far as men are in His place, so far may we seek it from men. We may desire the praise of our parents and superiors, and the praise of good men—in a word, all whom we have a value for ; but the desire of indiscriminate praise, the praise of those for whom we have no respect or regard, this is the mischief. We *may* desire the praise of those we have never seen, if we believe them to be good men. St. Paul not only speaks of the mutual rejoicing between himself and the Corinthians⁴, who knew each other, but likewise returns thanks that the fame of the faith of the Romans was spread all over the Christian world⁵. And in this way we may desire the praise of good persons yet unborn—I mean the Church of God, to the end of time. St. Mary, in the hymn we daily use, returns thanks that “from henceforth all generations shall call her blessed⁶.” But this feeling of hers is very different from the desire of what is called glory, posthumous fame, fame after death ; as if, forsooth, it were a good thing to have one's name familiar in the mouths of the mixed multitude of this world, of swearers, and jesters, and liars, and railers, and blasphemers, and of all those men, who even if they do not sin grossly, yet use their tongues for evil, speak the words of

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 4.⁵ Rom. i. 8.⁶ Luke i. 48.

the world, slander the Church, speak evil of dignities, propagate error, and defend sinners; a great thing truly, and much to be desired, to be honoured by that evil world which dishonours God and His Son!

One additional caution I must add, about allowing ourselves the praise of others; not only must we desire the praise of none but good men, but we must not earnestly desire to be known even by many good men. The truth is, we cannot know, really know, many persons at all, and it is always dangerous to delight in the praises of strangers, even though we believe them to be good men, and much more to seek their praises, which is a kind of ambition. And further than this, it is more agreeable to the Christian temper to be satisfied rather to know and to be known by a few, and to grow day by day in their esteem and affection, than to desire one's name to be on the lips of many, though they profess religion, and associate us with religious objects. And it is our great privilege to have the real blessing in our power, while the fancied good alone is difficult to be gained. Few Christians can be great or can leave a name to posterity; but most Christians will, in the length of their lives, be able to secure the love and praise of one or two, who are to them the representatives of Him whom "having not seen they love," and in whose presence, or at least in whose memory, they may comfort their heart till He come. This doubtless has been the happiness of many saints who have not even left their names behind them. It was the privilege doubtless of St. Simon and St. Jude. They, indeed, were not simply unknown to the world in their life-time, but even hated and persecuted by it. Upon them came our SAVIOUR's prophecy, that "men should revile them . . . and say all manner of evil against them falsely for His sake⁷." Yet in the affection the Church bore them, in the love they bore to each other, and, above all, the praise of that SAVIOUR whom they had followed on earth, and who named them in the number of those who had continued with Him in His temptations⁸, and were written in heaven, they had a real glory, not as the world giveth. Who can estimate, who can imagine the deep, the wonderful, the awful joy which the approbation of CHRIST would impart to them. When we consider how

⁷ Matt. v. 11.

⁸ Luke xxii. 28—30.

intimately they were allowed to associate with HIM, how they were witnesses of His heavenly conversation through the days of His flesh, of His acts of mercy, of His Divine words, of the grace, the tenderness, the sanctity, the majesty, the calmness, which reigned within HIM; of His knowledge, His wisdom, His perfect love of God, His zeal for God's service, His patient obedience,—and much more when they knew the dread secret of what HE was before HE came on earth, what HE was even while on earth in presence,—to have had a smile, an encouraging word, from HIM, was it not a privilege to treasure in memory beyond any thing else, a remembrance so bright that every thing else looked discoloured and dim? and would it not have amounted to a loss of reason in them to have even had the thought of seeking the praise of weak, ignorant, sinful mortals?

Let us seek this praise which cometh of God, though we shall not have that sensible experience of it which the Apostles were vouchsafed. Let us seek it, for it is to be obtained; it is given to those worthy of it. The poorest, the oldest, and most infirm among us, those who are living not merely in obscurity, but are despised and forgotten, who seem to answer no good purpose by living on, and whose death will not be felt even by their neighbours as a loss, these even may obtain our SAVIOUR'S approving look, and receive the future greeting, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Go on, then, contentedly in the path of duty, seeking CHRIST in His house and in His ordinances, and HE will be your glory at His coming. HE will own you before His FATHER. Let the world record in history the names of heroes, statesmen, and conquerors, and reward courage, and ability, and skill, and perseverance, with its proud titles of honour. Verily, these have their reward. Your names will be written in Heaven, with those of St. Simon and St. Jude, and the other Apostles. You will have the favour of HIM whose favour is life. "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear HIM; and HE will show them His covenant⁹."

⁹ Psalm xxv. 14.

SERMON CLIX.

TRUTH HIDDEN WHEN NOT SOUGHT AFTER.

2 TIM. iv. 4.

“ They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

FROM these words of the blessed Apostle, written shortly before he suffered martyrdom, we learn, that there is such a thing as religious truth, and therefore there is such a thing as religious error. We learn that religious truth is *one*—and therefore that all views of religion *but* one are wrong. And we learn, moreover, that so it was to be (for his words are a prophecy) that professed Christians, forgetting this, should turn away their ears from the one Truth, and should be turned, not to one, but to many fables. All this is fulfilled before our eyes; our religious creeds and professions at this day are many; but Truth is one: therefore they cannot all be right, or rather almost all of them must be wrong. That is, the multitude of men are wrong, so far as they differ; and as they differ, not about trivial points, but about great matters, it follows that the multitude of men, whether by their own fault or not, are wrong even in the greater matters of religion.

This is a most solemn thought, and a perplexing one. However, there is another which, though it ought not to be perplexing, is perplexing still, and perhaps has greater need to be con-

sidered and explained ; I mean that men of learning and ability are so often wrong in religious matters also. It is a stumbling-block to many, when they find that those who seem the legitimate guides furnished by God's providence, who are in some sense the natural prophets and expounders of the truth, that these too are on many sides, and therefore many of them on the side of error also. There are persons who can despise the opinions of the *many*, and feel that *they* are not right, but that truth, if it be found, lies with the *few* ; and since men of ability *are* among the few, they think that truth lies with men of ability, and when after all they are told that able men are ranged on contrary sides in religious questions, they either hastily deny the fact, or they are startled, and stagger in their faith.

But on the contrary, let us honestly confess what is certain, that not the ignorant, or weakminded, or dull, or enthusiastic, or extravagant only turn their ears from the Truth and are turned unto fables, but also men of powerful minds, keen perceptions, extended views, ample and various knowledge. Let us, I say, confess it ; yet let us not believe in the Truth the less on account of it.

I say that in the number of the adversaries of the Truth, there are many men of highly endowed and highly cultivated minds. Why should we deny this ? It is unfair to do so ; and not only unfair, but very unnecessary. What is called ability and talent does not mark a man a Christian ; nay, often, as may be shown without difficulty, it is the occasion of his rejecting Christianity, or this or that part of it. Not only in the higher ranks of society do we see this ; even in the humble and secluded village, it will commonly be found, that those who have greater gifts of mind than others around them, who have more natural quickness, shrewdness, and wit, are the very persons who are the most likely to turn out ill—who are least under the influence of religious principles—and neither obey nor even revere the Gospel of salvation which CHRIST has brought us.

Now if we consult St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, we shall find the same state of things existing even in the first age of Christianity. Even the Apostle speaks of those who were blind, or to whom his Gospel was hid ; and he elsewhere describes them, not as the uneducated and dull of understanding, but as

the wise of this world, the scribe and the disputer. Even then, before the Apostle's prophecy in the text was fulfilled, there were many who erred from the truth even in the midst of light, and in spite of superior intellectual endowments and acquirements.

Does not our SAVIOUR HIMSELF say the same thing, when HE thanks His FATHER, LORD of heaven and earth, that HE hath hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes?

Now it should not surprise us when men of acute and powerful understandings more or less reject the Gospel, for this reason, that the Christian revelation addresses itself to our hearts, to our love of truth and goodness, our fear of sinning, and our desire to gain God's favour; and quickness, sagacity, depth of thought, strength of mind, power of comprehension, perception of the beautiful, power of language, and the like, though they are excellent gifts, are clearly quite of a different kind from these spiritual excellences—a man may have the one without having the other. *This*, then, is the plain reason why able, or again why learned men are so often defective Christians, because there is no necessary connexion between faith and ability; because faith is one thing and ability is another; because ability of mind is a *gift*, and faith is a *grace*. Who would ever argue that a man could, like Samson, conquer lions or throw down the gates of a city, because he was able, or accomplished, or experienced in the business of life? Who would ever argue that a man could see because he could hear, or run with the swift because he had “the tongue of the learned¹?” These gifts are different in kind. In like manner, powers of mind and religious principles and feelings are distinct gifts; and as all the highest spiritual excellence, humility, firmness, patience, would never enable a man to read an unknown tongue, or to enter into the depths of science, so all the most brilliant mental endowments, wit, or imagination, or penetration, or depth, will never of themselves make us wise in religion. And as we should fairly and justly deride the savage who wished to decide questions of science or literature by the sword, so may we justly look with amazement on the error of those who think that they can master

¹ Is. l. 4.

the high mysteries of spiritual truth, and find their way to God, by what is commonly called reason, *i. e.* by the random and blind efforts of mere mental acuteness, and mere experience of the world.

That Truth, which St. Paul preached, addresses itself to our spiritual nature: it will be rightly understood, valued, accepted, by none but lovers of truth, virtue, purity, humility, and peace. Wisdom will be justified of her children. Those, indeed, who are thus endowed may and will go on to use their powers of mind, whatever they are, in the service of religion; none but they can use them aright. Those who reject revealed truth wilfully, are such as do not love moral and religious truth. It is bad men, proud men, men of hard hearts, and unhumbed tempers, and immoral lives, these are they who reject the Gospel. These are they of whom St. Paul speaks in another Epistle—"If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." With this agree the instances of turning the ears from the truth which the New Testament affords us. Who were they who were the enemies of CHRIST and His Apostles? The infidel Sadducees, the immoral, hard-hearted, yet hypocritical Pharisees, Herod, who married his brother Philip's wife², and Felix, who trembled when St. Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come³. On the other hand, men of holy and consistent lives, as Cornelius the Centurion, and those who were frequenters of religious ordinances, as Simeon and Anna, these became Christians. So it is now. If men turn unto fables of their own will, they do it on account of their pride, or their love of indolence and self-indulgence.

This should be kept in mind when Christians are alarmed, as they sometimes are, on hearing instances of infidelity or heresy among those who read, reflect, and inquire; whereas, however we may mourn over such instances, we have no reason to be surprised at them. It is quite enough for Christians to be able to show, as they well can, that belief in revealed religion is not inconsistent with the highest gifts and acquirements of mind, that men even of the strongest and highest intellect have been

² Matt. xiv. 3.

³ Acts xxiv. 25.

Christians; but they have as little reason to be perplexed at finding *other* men of ability not true believers, as at finding that certain *rich* men are not true believers, or certain *poor* men, or some in every rank and circumstance of life. A belief in Christianity has hardly more connexion with what is called talent, than it has with riches, station, power, or bodily strength.

Now let me explain what I mean by a further remark. Is it not plain that earnestness is necessary for gaining religious truth? On the other hand, is it not a natural effect of ability to save us trouble, and even to tempt us to dispense with it, and to lead us to be indolent? Do not we see this even in the case of children—the more clever are the more idle, because they rely on their own quickness and power of apprehension? Is indolence the way to gain knowledge from God? Yet this surely is continually forgotten in the world. It is forgotten in a measure even by the best of Christians, for no man on earth seeks to know God's will, and to do His duty with an earnestness suitable to the importance of the object. But not to speak thus rigorously, let us consider for an instant how eagerly men in general pursue objects of this world; now with what portion of this eagerness do they exert themselves to know the truth of God's word? Undeniable, then, as is the doctrine that God does not reveal HIMSELF to those who do not seek HIM, it is certain that its truth is not really felt by us, or we should seek HIM more earnestly than we do.

Nothing is more common than to think that we shall gain religious knowledge as a thing of course, without express trouble on our part. Though there is no art or business of this world which is learned without time and exertion, yet it is commonly conceived that the knowledge of God and our duty will come as if by accident or by a natural process. Men go by their feelings and likings; they take up what is popular, or what comes first to hand. They think it much if they now and then have serious thoughts, if they now and then open the Bible; and their minds recur with satisfaction to such seasons, as if they had done some very great thing, never remembering that to seek and gain religious truth is a long and systematic work. And others think that education will do every thing for them, and that if they learn to read, and use religious words, they understand religion

itself. And others again go so far as to maintain that exertion is *not* necessary for discovering the truth. They say that religious truth is simple and easily acquired; that Scripture, being intended for all, is at once open to all, and that if it had difficulties, that very circumstance would be an objection to it. And others, again, maintain that there *are* difficulties in religion, and that this shows that it is an indifferent matter whether they seek or not as to those matters which are difficult.

In these and other ways do men deceive themselves into a carelessness about religious truth. And is not all this varied negligence sufficient to account for the varieties of religious opinion which we see all around us? Do not these two facts just illustrate each other; the discordance of our religious opinions needing some explanation; and our actual indolence and negligence in seeking the truth accounting for it? How many sects, all professing Christianity, but opposed to each other, dishonour this country! Doubtless if men sought the truth with one tenth part of the zeal with which they seek to acquire wealth or secular knowledge, their differences would diminish year by year. Doubtless if they gave a half or a quarter of the time to prayer for divine guidance which they give to amusement or recreation, or which they give to dispute and contention, they would ever be approximating to each other. We differ in opinion: therefore we cannot all be right; many must be wrong; many must be turned from the truth; and why is this, but on account of that undeniable fact which we see before us, that we do not pray and seek for the Truth?

But this melancholy diversity is sometimes explained, as I just now hinted, in another way. Some men will tell us that this difference of opinion in religious matters which exists, is a proof, not that the Truth is withheld from us on account of our negligence in seeking it, but that religious truth is not worth seeking at all, or that it is not given us. The present confused and perplexed state of things, which is really a proof of God's anger at our negligence, these men say is a proof that religious truth cannot be obtained; that there is no such thing as religious truth; that there is no right or wrong in religion; that provided we *think* ourselves right, one set of opinions is as good as another; that we shall all come right in the end if we do but mean well,

or rather if we do not mean ill. That is, we create confusion by our negligence and disobedience, and then excuse our negligence by the existence of that confusion. It is no uncommon thing, I say, for men to say, "that in religious matters God has willed that men should differ," and to support their opinion by no better argument than the fact that they *do* differ; and they go on to conclude that *therefore* we need not perplex ourselves about matters of *faith*, about which, after all, we cannot be certain. Others, again, in a similar spirit, argue that forms and ordinances are of no account; that they are little matters; that it is uncertain what is right and what is wrong in them, and that to insist on them as important to religion is the mark of a narrow mind. And others, again, it is to be feared, go so far as to think that indulgence of the passions, or self-will, or selfishness, or avarice, is not wrong, because it is the way of the world and cannot be prevented.

To all such arguments against religious truth, it is sufficient to reply, that no one who does not seek the truth with all his heart and strength, can tell what is of importance and what is not; that to attempt carelessly to decide on points of faith or morals is a matter of serious presumption; that no one knows *whither* he will be carried *if* he seeks the Truth perseveringly, and therefore, that since he cannot see at first starting the course into which his inquiries will be divinely directed, he *cannot* possibly say beforehand whether they may not lead him on to certainty as to things which at present he thinks trifling or extravagant or irrational. "What I do," said our Lord to St. Peter, "thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." "*Seek* and ye shall find;" this is the divine rule—"If thou *criest* after knowledge, and *lifest up* thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as *for hid* treasure, *then* shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God⁴."

This is a subject which cannot too strongly be insisted on. Act up to your light, though in the midst of difficulties, and you will be carried on, you do not know how far. Abraham obeyed the call and journeyed, not knowing whither he went; so we, if

⁴ Prov. ii. 3—5.

we follow the voice of GOD, shall be brought on step by step into a new world, of which before we had no idea. This is His gracious way with us : HE gives, not all at once, but by measure and season, wisely. To him that hath, more shall be given. But we must begin at the beginning. Each truth has its own order ; we cannot join the way of life at any point of the course we please ; we cannot learn advanced truths before we have learned primary ones. " Call upon ME," says the Divine Word, " and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not ⁵." Religious men are always learning ; but when men refuse to profit by light already granted, their light is turned to darkness. Observe our LORD's conduct with the Pharisees. They asked HIM on what authority HE acted. HE gave them no direct answer, but referred them to the mission of John the Baptist—"The baptism of John, whence was it ? from heaven or from men ⁶ ?" They refused to say. Then HE said, " Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." That is, they would not profit by the knowledge they already had from St. John the Baptist, who spoke of CHRIST—therefore no more was given them.

All of us may learn a lesson here, for all of us are in danger of hastily finding fault with others, and condemning their opinions or practices ; not considering, that unless we have faithfully obeyed our conscience and improved our talents, we are no fit judges of them at all. CHRIST and His Saints are alike destitute of form or comeliness in the eyes of the world, and it is only as we labour to change our nature, through God's help, and to serve HIM truly, that we begin to discern the beauty of holiness. Then, at length, we find reason to suspect our own judgments of what is truly good, and perceive our own blindness ; for by degrees we find that those whose opinions and conduct we hitherto despised or wondered at as extravagant or unaccountable or weak, really know more than ourselves, and are above us—and so, ever as we rise in knowledge and grow in spiritual illumination, they (to our amazement) rise also, while we look at them. The better we are, the more we understand their excellence ; till at length we are taught something of their DIVINE MASTER's

⁵ Jer. xxxiii. 3.

⁶ Matt. xxi. 25.

perfections also, which before were hid from us, and see why it is that, though the Gospel is set on a hill in the midst of the world, like a city which cannot be hid, yet to multitudes it is notwithstanding hid, since HE taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the pure in heart alone can see God.

How are the sheep of CHRIST's flock scattered abroad in the waste world! HE came to gather them together in one; but they wander again and faint by the way, as having lost their SHEPHERD. What religious opinion can be named which some men or other have not at some time held? All are equally confident in the truth of their own doctrines, though the many must be mistaken. In this confusion let us, my brethren, look to ourselves, each to himself. There must be a right and a wrong, and no matter whether others agree with us or not, it is to us a solemn practical concern not to turn away our ears from the truth. Let not the diversity of opinion in the world dismay you, or deter you from seeking all your life long true wisdom. It is not a search for this day or that, but as you should ever grow in grace, so should you ever grow also in the knowledge of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. Care not for the perplexing question which many will put to you, "How can you be sure that you are right more than others?" Others are nothing to you, if they are not holy and devout in their conversation—and we all know what is meant by being holy; we know whom we should call holy; to be holy is to be like an Apostle. Seek truth in the way of *obedience*; try to act up to your conscience, and let your opinions be the result, not of mere chance reasoning or fancy, but of an improved heart. This way, I say, carries with it an evidence to ourselves of its being the right way, if any way be right; and that there is a right and a wrong way conscience also tells us. God surely will listen to none but those who strive to obey HIM. Those who thus proceed, watching, praying, taking all means given them of gaining the truth, studying the Scriptures, and doing their duty; in short, those who seek religious truth by principle and habit, as the main business of their lives, humbly not arrogantly, peaceably not contentiously, shall not be "turned unto fables." "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear HIM;" but in proportion as we are conscious to ourselves that we are indolent, and transgress our own sense of

right and wrong, in the same proportion we have cause to fear, not only that we are not in a safe state, but, further than this, that we do not know what is a safe state, and what an unsafe,—what is light and what is darkness, what is truth and what is error; which way leads to heaven and which to hell. “The way of the wicked is in darkness; they know not at what they stumble⁷.”

I know we shall find it very hard to rouse ourselves, to break the force of habit, to resolve to serve God, and persevere in doing so. And assuredly we must expect, even at best, and with all our efforts, perhaps backslidings, and certainly much continual imperfection all through our lives, in all we do. But this should create in us a horror of disobedience, not a despair at overcoming ourselves. We are not under the law of nature, but under grace; we are not bid do a thing above our strength, because, though our hearts are naturally weak, we are not left to ourselves. According to the command, so is the gift. God’s grace is sufficient for us. Why then should we fear? Rather why should we not make any sacrifice, and give up all that is naturally pleasing to us, rather than that light and truth should have come into the world, yet we not find them? Let us be willing to endure toil and trouble; and should times of comparative quiet be given to us, should for a while temptation be withdrawn, or the SPIRIT of comfort poured upon us, let us not inconsiderately rest in these accidental blessings. While we thank God for them, let us remember that in its turn the time of labour and fear and danger and anxiety will come upon us; and that we must act our part well in it. We live here to struggle and to endure; the time of eternal rest will come hereafter.

“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep His commandments, and that seek HIM with the whole heart⁸.” “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day⁹.”

⁷ Prov. iv. 19.

⁸ Ps. cxix. 1, 2.

⁹ Prov. iv. 18.

S E R M O N C L X .

OBEDIENCE TO GOD THE WAY TO FAITH IN CHRIST.

MARK xii. 34.

“ When JESUS saw that he answered discreetly, HE said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of GOD.”

THE answer of the Scribe, which our blessed LORD here commends, was occasioned by CHRIST'S setting before him the two great commandments of the law. When HE had declared the love of GOD and of man to comprehend our whole duty, the Scribe said, “ Master, Thou hast said the truth; for there is one GOD, and there is none other but HE. And to love HIM with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.” Upon this acknowledgment of the duty of general religious obedience, CHRIST replied in the words of the text, “ Thou art not far from the kingdom of GOD,” *i. e.* Thou art not far from being a Christian.

In these words, then, we are taught, first, that the Christian's faith and obedience are not the same religion as that of natural conscience, as being some way beyond it; secondly, that this way is “ not far,” not far in the case of those who try to act up to their conscience; in other words, that obedience to conscience leads to obedience to the Gospel, which, instead of being something different altogether, is but the completion and perfection of that religion which natural conscience teaches.

Indeed, it would have been strange if the GOD of nature had

said one thing, and the God of grace another ; if the truths which our conscience taught us without the information of Scripture, were contradicted by that information when obtained. But it is not so ; there are not two ways of pleasing God ; what conscience suggests, CHRIST has sanctioned and explained ; to love God and our neighbour are the great duties of the Gospel as well as of the law ; he who endeavours to fulfil them by the light of nature is in the way towards, is, as our LORD said, “ not far from CHRIST’s kingdom ;” for to him that hath more shall be given.

It is not in one or two places merely, that this same doctrine is declared to us ; indeed, all revelation is grounded on those simple truths, which our own consciences teach us in a measure, though a poor measure, even without it. It is One God, and none other but HE, who speaks first in our consciences, then in His Holy Word ; and lest we should be in any difficulty about the matter, HE has most mercifully told us so in Scripture, wherein HE refers again and again (as in the passage connected with the text), to the great moral law as the foundation of the truth which His Apostles and Prophets, and last of all His SON, have taught us : “ Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man ¹.”

Yet though this is so plain, both from our own moral sense, and the declarations of Scripture, yet for many reasons it is necessary to insist upon it ; chiefly, because it being very hard to keep God’s commandments, men would willingly persuade themselves, if they could, that strict obedience is not necessary under the Gospel, and that something will be taken, for CHRIST’s sake, in the stead of it. Instead of labouring, under God’s grace, to change their wills, to purify their hearts, and so prepare themselves for the kingdom of God, they imagine that in that kingdom they may be saved by something short of this, by their baptism, or by their ceremonial observances (the burnt offerings and sacrifices which the Scribe disparages), or by their correct knowledge of the truth, or by their knowledge of their own sinfulness, or by some past act of faith, which is to last them during their lives, or by some strong habitual persuasion that they are safe ; or, again, by the performance of some one part of their duty, though

¹ Eccles. xii. 13.

they neglect the rest, as if GOD said a thing to us in nature, and CHRIST unsaid it; and when men wish a thing, it is not hard to find texts in Scripture, which may be ingeniously perverted to suit their purpose. The error then being so common in practice, of believing that CHRIST came to gain for us easier terms of admittance into heaven than we had before (whereas, in fact, instead of making obedience less strict, HE has enabled us to obey GOD more strictly; and instead of gaining *easier* terms of admittance, HE has gained us *altogether* our admittance into heaven, which before was closed against us); this error, I say, being so common, it may be right to insist on the opposite truth, however obvious, that obedience to GOD is the way to know and believe in CHRIST.

1. Now, first, let us consider how plainly we are taught in Scripture that perfect obedience is the standard of Gospel holiness. By St. Paul: "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God²." "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God³." "Whatsoever things are true . . honest . . just . . pure . . lovely . . of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things⁴." By St. James: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all⁵." By St. Peter: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue . . knowledge . . temperance . . patience . . godliness . . brotherly kindness . . charity⁶." By St. John: "Hereby do we know that we know HIM, if we keep His commandments." Lastly, by our LORD HIMSELF: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth ME; and he that loveth ME, shall be loved of My FATHER, and I will love him, and will manifest MYSELF to him⁷." And, above all, the following clear declaration in the Sermon on the Mount: "Whosoever . . shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven;

² Rom. xii. 2.³ 1 Cor. vii. 19.⁴ Phil. iv. 8.⁵ James ii. 10.⁶ 2 Pet. i. 5—7.⁷ John xiv. 21.

but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven ⁸."

These texts, and a multitude of others, show that the Gospel leaves us just where it found us, as regards the necessity of our obedience to GOD; that CHRIST has not obeyed instead of us, but that obedience is quite as imperative, as if CHRIST had never come; nay, is pressed upon us with additional sanctions; the difference being, not that HE relaxes the strict rule of keeping His commandments, but that HE gives us spiritual aids, which we have not except through HIM, to enable us to keep them. Accordingly CHRIST's service is represented in Scripture, not as different from that religious obedience which conscience teaches us naturally, but as the perfection of it, as I have already said. We are told again and again, that obedience to GOD leads on to faith in CHRIST; that it is the only recognized way to CHRIST; and that, therefore, to believe in HIM, ordinarily implies that we are living in obedience to GOD. For instance: "Every man . . . that hath heard and hath learned of the FATHER, cometh unto ME ⁹;" "He that doeth truth, cometh to the Light ¹," *i. e.* to CHRIST; "No man can come to ME, except the FATHER which hath sent ME, draw him;" "If any man will do the will of GOD, he shall know of the doctrine ²." On the other hand: "He that hateth ME, hateth My FATHER also ³;" "If ye had known ME, ye should have known My FATHER also ⁴;" "Whosoever denieth the SON, the same hath not the FATHER ⁵;" "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of CHRIST, hath not GOD: he that abideth in the doctrine of CHRIST, he hath both the FATHER and the SON ⁶."

In these and other passages of Scripture we learn, that though CHRIST came to be the light of the world, yet HE is not and cannot be a light to all, but to those only who seek HIM in the way of His commandments; and to all others HE is hid, the god of this world "blinding the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of CHRIST, who is the Image of GOD, should shine unto them ⁷."

⁸ Matt. v. 19.

⁹ John vi. 45.

¹ John iii. 21.

² John vii. 17.

³ John xv. 23.

⁴ John viii. 19.

⁵ 1 John ii. 23.

⁶ 2 John 9.

⁷ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

2. And if we look to the history of the first propagation of the Gospel, we find this view confirmed. As far as we can trace the history, we find the early Christian Church was principally composed of those who had long been in the habit of obeying their consciences carefully, and so preparing themselves for CHRIST's religion, that kingdom of GOD from which the text says they were not far. Zacharias and Elisabeth, to whom the approach of CHRIST's kingdom was first revealed, are described as "both righteous before GOD, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD, blameless⁸." Joséph, St. Mary's husband, is called "a just man⁹;" Simeon is spoken of as "a just and devout¹⁰ man;" Nathanael as "an Israelite in whom was no guile¹¹;" Joseph of Arimathea was "a good man and a just¹²;" Cornelius, the centurion, was a "religious man, and one that feared GOD with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to GOD alway¹³." And in the book of Acts generally, we shall find (as far as we are told any thing) that those chiefly were addressed and converted by St. Paul, who had previously trained themselves in a religious life: At Perga, St. Paul addressed the Israelites and those who feared GOD, not the mere thoughtless heathen; and many of these followed him¹⁴. At Thessalonica a great multitude of religious Greeks believed¹⁵; and at Athens the Apostle still disputed with the Jews, and with the professedly religious persons, though he also addressed the educated heathens who lived there. Here then is much evidence that CHRIST and His Apostles chiefly sought and found their first followers, not among open sinners, but among those who were endeavouring, however imperfectly, to obey GOD.

But it may be asked, Did CHRIST hold out no hope for those who had lived in sin? Doubtless HE did, if they determined to forsake their sin. HE came to save all, whatever their former life, who gave themselves up to HIM as their LORD and SAVIOUR, and in His Church HE gathered together of every kind, those who had departed from GOD, as well as those who had ever served HIM well. Open sinners must have a beginning of repentance, if they are to repent; and on this first beginning

⁸ Luke i. 6.⁹ Matt. i. 19.¹ Luke ii. 25.² John i. 47.³ Luke xxiii. 50.⁴ Acts x. 2.⁵ Acts xiii.⁶ Acts xvii.

CHRIST invites them to HIM at once, without delay, for pardon and for aid. But this is not the question; of course all who come to HIM will be received; none will be cast out⁷. But the question is, not this, but whether they are likely to come, hear His voice, and follow HIM; again, whether they will, generally speaking, prove as consistent and deeply-taught Christians as those who, compared with them, have never departed from God at all; and here all the advantage, doubtless, is on the side of those who (in the words of Scripture) have walked in the ordinances of the LORD blameless⁸. When sinners truly repent, then, indeed, they are altogether brothers in CHRIST's kingdom with those who have not in the same sense "need of repentance;" but that they should repent at all, is (alas!) so far from being likely, that when the unexpected event takes place, it causes such joy in heaven (from the marvellousness of it) as is not even excited by the ninety and nine just persons who need no such change of mind⁹. Of such changes some instances are given us in the Gospels, for the encouragement of all penitents, such as that of the woman, mentioned by St. Luke, who "loved much." CHRIST most graciously went among sinners, if so be HE might save them; and we know that even those open sinners, when they knew that they were sinners, were nearer salvation, and in a better state, than the covetous and irreligious Pharisees, who added to their other gross sins, hypocrisy, blindness, a contempt of others, and a haughty and superstitious reliance on the availing virtue of their religious privileges.

And moreover, of these penitents of whom I speak, and whom, when they become penitents, we cannot love too dearly (after our SAVIOUR's pattern), nay, or reverence too highly, and whom the Apostles, after CHRIST's departure, brought into the Church in such vast multitudes, none, as far as we know, had any sudden change of mind from bad to good wrought in them; nor do we hear of any of them honoured with any important station in the Church. Great as St. Paul's sin was in persecuting CHRIST's followers, before his conversion, his sin was of a different kind; he was not transgressing, but obeying his conscience (however blinded it was); he was doing what he thought his duty, when he was

⁷ John vi. 3. 7.⁸ Luke i. 6.⁹ Ibid. xv. 7.

arrested by the heavenly vision, which, when presented to him, he at once "obeyed;" he was not sinning *against light*, but *in* darkness. We know nothing of the precise state of his mind immediately before his conversion, and we do know thus much, that years elapsed after his conversion before he was employed as an Apostle in the Church of God.

I have confined myself to the time of CHRIST'S coming; but not only then, but at all times and under all circumstances, as all parts of the Bible inform us, obedience to the light we possess is the way to gain more light. In the words of Wisdom, in the book of Proverbs, "I love them that love ME, and those that seek ME early shall find ME. . . . I lead in the way of righteousness, and in the midst of the paths of judgment¹." Or in the still more authoritative words of CHRIST HIMSELF: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much²;" and, "He that hath, to him shall be given³."

Now let us see some of the consequences which follow from this great Scripture truth.

1. First of all, we see the hopelessness of waiting for any sudden change of heart, if we are at present living in sin. Far more persons deceive themselves by some such vain expectation than at first sight may appear. That there are even many irreligious men, who, from hearing the false doctrines now so common, and receiving general impressions from them, look forward for a possible day, when God will change their hearts by His own mere power, in spite of themselves, and who thus get rid of the troublesome thought that now they are in a state of fearful peril; who say they can do nothing till His time comes, while still they acknowledge themselves to be far from HIM; even this I believe to be a fact, strange and gross as the self-deception may appear to be. And others, too, many more doubtless, are there who, not thinking themselves far from HIM, but, on the contrary, high in His favour, still, by a dreadful deceit of Satan, are led to be indolent and languid in their obedience to His commandments, from a pretence that they can do nothing of themselves, and must wait for the successive motions of God's grace to excite them to action. The utmost these persons do is to talk of religion, when

¹ Prov. viii. 17. 20.

² Luke xvi. 10.

³ Mark iv. 25.

they ought to be up and active, and waiting for the Blessed SPIRIT of CHRIST, by obeying God's will. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light⁴." This is the exhortation. And doubtless to all those who live a self-indulgent life, however they veil their self-indulgence from themselves by a notion of their superior religious knowledge, and by their faculty of speaking fluently in Scripture language, to all such the word of life says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked;" HE tries the heart, and disdains the mere worship of the lips. HE acknowledges no man as a believer in His SON, who does not anxiously struggle to obey His commandments to the utmost; to none of those who seek without striving, and who consider themselves safe, to none of these does HE give "power to become sons of God⁵." Be not deceived; such have fallen from that state in which their baptism placed them, and are "far from the kingdom of God." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap⁶." And if any one says that St. Paul was converted suddenly, and without his exerting himself, it is sufficient to reply, that, guilty as St. Paul was, his guilt was not that of indolence, and self-indulgence, and indifference. His sin was that of *neglecting the study of Scripture*; and thus, missing the great truth that JESUS was the CHRIST, he persecuted the Christians; but though his conscience was ill-informed, and that by his own fault, yet he obeyed it, such as it was. He did what he did ignorantly. If then the case really be that St. Paul *was* suddenly converted, hence, it is true, some kind of vague hope may be said to be held out to furious intolerant bigots, and bloodthirsty persecutors, if they are acting in consequence of their own notions of duty; none to the slothful and negligent and lukewarm; none *but* to those who can say, with St. Paul, that they have "lived in all good conscience before God until this day⁷;" and that not under an easy profession, but in a straitest religious sect, giving themselves up to their duty, and following the law of God, though in ignorance, yet with all their heart and soul.

2. But, after all, there are very many more than I have as yet mentioned, who wait for a time of repentance to come, while at

⁴ Eph. v. 14.

⁵ John i. 12.

⁶ Gal. vi. 7.

⁷ Acts xxiii. 1.

present they live in sin. For instance, the young, who think it will be time enough to think of God when they grow old; that religion will then come as a matter of course, and that they will then like it naturally, just as they now like their follies and sins. Or those who are much engaged in worldly business, who confess they do not give that attention to religion which they ought to give; who neglect the ordinances of the Church; who desecrate the LORD's day; who give little or no time to the study of God's word; who allow themselves in various small transgressions of their conscience, and resolutely harden themselves against the remorse which such transgressions are calculated to cause them; and all this they do under the idea, that at length a convenient season will come, when they may give themselves to religious duties. They determine on retiring at length from the world, and of making up for lost time by greater diligence then. All such persons, and how many they are! think that they will be able to seek CHRIST when they please, though they have lived all their lives with no true love either of God or man; *i. e.* they do not, in their hearts, believe our LORD's doctrine contained in the text, that to obey God is to be near CHRIST, and that to disobey is to be far from HIM.

How will this truth be plain to us in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed! *Now* we do not believe that strict obedience is as necessary as it is. I say we do *not* believe it, though we say we do. No one, of course, believes it in its fulness, but most of us are deceived by words, and say we accept and believe, when we hardly do more than profess it. We say, indeed, that obedience is absolutely necessary, and are surprised to have our real belief in what we say questioned; but we do not give the truth that place in the scheme of our religion which this profession requires, and thus we cheat our consciences. We put something *before* it, in our doctrinal system, as *more* necessary than it; one man puts faith, another outward devotion, a third attention to his temporal calling, another zeal for the Church; that is, we put a part for the whole of our duty, and so run the risk of losing our souls. These are the burnt-offerings and sacrifices which even the Scribe put aside before the weightier matters of the Law. Or again, we fancy that the means of gaining heaven are something stranger and rarer than the mere obvious duty of obedience

to GOD: we are loth to seek CHRIST in the waters of Jordan rather than in Pharpar and Abana, rivers of Damascus; we prefer to seek HIM in the height above, or to descend into the deep, rather than to believe that the word is nigh us, even in our mouth and in our heart⁸. Hence, in false religions some men have even tortured themselves and been cruel to their flesh, thereby to become as gods, and to mount aloft; and in our own, with a not less melancholy, though less self-denying, error, men fancy that certain strange effects on their minds, strong emotion, restlessness, and an unmanly excitement and extravagance of thought and feeling, are the tokens of that inscrutable SPIRIT, who is given us, not to make us something *other than* men, but to make us, what without His gracious aid we never shall be, upright, self-mastering men, humble and obedient children of our LORD and SAVIOUR.

In that day of trial all these deceits will be laid aside; we shall stand in our own real form, whether it be of heaven or of earth, the wedding garment, or the old raiment of sin⁹; and then, how many (do we think) will be revealed as the heirs of light, who have followed CHRIST in His narrow way, and humbled themselves after His manner (though not in His perfection, and with nothing of His merit) to the daily duties of soberness, mercy, gentleness, self-denial, and the fear of GOD?

These, be they many or few, will then receive their prize from HIM who died for them, who has made them what they are, and completes in heaven what first by conscience, then by His SPIRIT, HE began here. Surely they were despised on the earth by the world; both by the open sinners, who thought their scrupulousness to be foolishness, and by such pretenders to God's favour, as thought it ignorance. But, in reality, they had received from their LORD the treasures both of wisdom and of knowledge, though men knew it not; and they then will be acknowledged by HIM before all creatures, as heirs of the glory prepared for them before the beginning of the world.

⁸ Rom. x. 8.

⁹ Zech. iii. 4.

SERMON CLXI.

SUDDEN CONVERSIONS.

1 COR. xv. 10.

“By the grace of God I am what I am : and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.”

WE can hardly conceive that grace, such as that given to the great Apostle who speaks in the text, would have been given in vain ; that is, we should not expect that it had been given, had it been foreseen and designed by the ALMIGHTY GIVER that it would have been in vain. By which I do not mean, of course, to deny that God's gifts are too often abused and wasted by man, which they are ; but, when we consider the wonderful mode of St. Paul's conversion, and the singular privilege granted him, the only one of men of whom is clearly recorded the privilege of seeing CHRIST with his bodily eyes after His ascension, as is alluded to shortly before the text ; I say, considering these high and extraordinary favours vouchsafed to the Apostle, we should naturally suppose that some great objects in the history of the Church were contemplated by means of them, such as in the event were fulfilled. We cannot tell, indeed, why God works, or by what rule HE chooses ; we must always be sober and humble in our thoughts about His ways, which are infinitely above our ways ; but what would be speculation, perhaps venturous speculation, before the event, at least becomes a profitable

meditation after it. At least now, when we read and dwell on St. Paul's history, we may discern and insist upon the suitability of his character before his conversion, for that display of free grace which was made in him. Not that he could merit such a great mercy—the idea is absurd as well as wicked; but that such a one as he was before God's grace, naturally grew by the aid of it into what he was afterwards as a Christian.

His, indeed, was a "wonderful conversion," as our Church in one place calls it, because it was so unexpected, and (as far as the appearance went) so sudden. Who of the suffering Christians, against whom he was raging so furiously, could have conceived that their enemy was to be the great preacher and champion of the despised Cross? Does God work miracles to reclaim His open malevolent adversaries, and not rather to encourage and lead forward those who timidly seek HIM?

It may be useful, then, to mention one or two several kinds of what may be called sudden conversions, to give some opinion on the character of each of them, and to inquire which of them really took place in St. Paul's case.

1. First; some men turn to religion all at once from some sudden impulse of mind, some powerful excitement, or some strong persuasion. It is a sudden resolve that strikes them. Now such cases occur very frequently where religion has nothing to do with the matter, and then we think little about it, merely calling the persons who thus change all at once volatile and light-minded. Thus there are persons who all of a sudden give up some pursuit which they have been eagerly set upon, or change from one trade or calling to another, or change their opinions as regards the world's affairs. Every one knows the impression left upon the mind by such instances. The persons thus changing may be, and often are, amiable, kind, and pleasant, as companions; but we cannot depend on them; and we pity them, as believing they are doing harm both to their temporal interests and to their own minds. Others there are who almost profess to love change for change-sake; they think the pleasure of life consists in seeing first one thing then another; variety is their chief good; and it is a sufficient objection in their minds to any pursuit or recreation, that it is old. These, too, pass suddenly and capriciously from one subject to another. So far in

matters of daily life ;—but when such a person exhibits a similar changeableness in his religious views, then men begin to be astonished, and look out with curiosity or anxiety to see what is the meaning of it ; and particularly if the individual, who thus suddenly changed, was very decided before in the particular course of life which he then followed. For instance, supposing he not merely professed no deep religious impressions, but actually was unbelieving or profligate ; or again, supposing he not merely professed himself of this creed or that, but was very warm and even bitter in the enforcement of it ; then, I say, men wonder, though they do not wonder at similar infirmities in matters of this world.

Nor can I say that they are wrong in being alive to such changes ; we *ought* to feel differently with reference to religious subjects, and not be as unconcerned about them as we are about the events of time. Did a man suddenly inform us, with great appearance of earnestness, that he had seen an accident in the street, or did he say that he had seen a miracle, I confess it is natural, nay, in the case of most men, certainly in the case of the uneducated, far more religious, to feel differently towards these two accounts ; to feel shocked, indeed, but not awed, at the first, to feel a certain solemn astonishment and pious reverence at the news of the miracle. For a religious mind is ever looking towards God, and seeking His traces ; referring all events to HIM, and desirous of His explanation of them ; and when to such a one, information is brought that God has in some extraordinary way showed HIMSELF, he *will* at first sight be tempted to believe it, and it is only the experience of the number of deceits and false prophecies which are in the world, his confidence in the Catholic Church which he sees before him, and which is his guide into the truth, and (if he be educated) his enlightened views concerning the course and laws of God's providence, which keep him steady, and make him hard to believe such stories. On the other hand, men destitute of religion altogether, of course from the first ridicule such accounts, and, as the event shows, rightly ; and yet, in spite of this, they are not so worthy our regard as those who at first were credulous, from having some religious principle, without enough religious knowledge. Therefore, I am not surprised that such sudden conversions as I have

been describing, deceive for a time even the better sort of people, whom I should blame, if I were called on to do so, not so much for the mere fact of their believing readily, but for their not believing the Church; for believing private individuals who have no authority, more than the Church, and for not recollecting St. Paul's words, "If any man . . . though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed¹."

2. In the cases of sudden conversion I have been speaking of, when men change at once either from open sin, or again from the zealous partizanship of a certain creed to some novel form of faith or worship, their light-mindedness is detected by their frequent changing—their changing again and again, so that one can never be certain of them. This is the test of their unsoundness;—having no root in themselves, their convictions and earnestness quickly wither away. But there is another kind of sudden conversion, which I proceed to mention, in which a man perseveres to the end, consistent in the new form he adopts, and which may be right or wrong, as it happens, but which *he* cannot be said to recommend or confirm to us by his own change. I mean when a man, for some reason or other, whether in religion or not, takes a great disgust to his present course of life, and suddenly abandons it for another. This is the case of those who rush from one to the other extreme, and it generally arises from strong and painful feeling, unsettling and, as it were, revolutionizing the mind. A story is told of a spendthrift, who having ruined himself by his extravagances, went out of doors to meditate on his own folly and misery, and in the course of a few hours returned home a determined miser, and was for the rest of his life remarkable for covetousness and penuriousness. This is not more extraordinary than the fickleness of mind just now described. In like manner, men sometimes will change suddenly from love to hatred, from over-daring to cowardice. These are no amiable changes, whether arising or not from bodily malady, as is sometimes the case; nor do they impart any credit or sanction to the particular course or habit of mind adopted on the change: neither do they in religion therefore. A man who suddenly professes

¹ Gal. i. 8, 9.

religion after a profligate life, merely because he is sick of his vices, or tormented by the thought of God's anger, which is the consequence of them, and without the love of God, does no honour to religion, for he might, if it so chanced, turn a miser or misanthrope ; and therefore, though religion is not at all the less holy and true, because he submits himself to it, and though doubtless it is a much better thing for *him* that he turns to religion than that he should become a miser or misanthrope, yet when he acts on such motives as I have described, he cannot be said to do any honour to the cause of religion by his conversion. Yet it is such persons who at various times have been thought great saints, and been reckoned to recommend and prove the truth of the Gospel to the world !

Now if any one asks what test there is that this kind of sudden conversion is not from God, as instability and frequent change are the test, on the other hand, in disproof of the divinity of the conversions just now mentioned, I answer,—its moroseness, inhumanity, and unfitness for this world. Men who change through strong passion and anguish, become as hard and as rigid as stone or iron ; they are not fit for life ; they are only fit for the solitudes in which they sometimes bury themselves ; they can only do one or two of their duties, and that only in one way ; they do not indeed change their principles, as the fickle convert, but, on the other hand, they cannot apply, adapt, accommodate, modify, diversify their principles to the existing state of things, which is the opposite fault. They do not aim at a perfect obedience in little things as well as great ; and a most serious fault it is, looking at it merely as a matter of practice, and without any reference to the views and motives from which it proceeds ; most opposed is it to the spirit of true religion, which is intended to fit us for all circumstances of life, as they come, in order that we may be humble, docile, ready, patient, and cheerful,—in order that we may really show ourselves God's servants, who do all things for *HIM*, coming when *He* calleth, going when *He* sendeth, doing this or that at His bidding. So much for the practice of such men ; and when we go higher, and ask *why* they are thus formal and unbending in their mode of life, what are the principles that make them thus harsh and unserviceable, I fear we must trace it to some form of selfishness and pride ; the same

principles which, under other circumstances, would change the profligate into the covetous and parsimonious.

I think it will appear at once that St. Paul's conversion, however it was effected, and whatever was the process of it, resembled neither the one nor the other of these. That it was not the change of a fickle mind is shown by his firmness in keeping to his new faith—by his constancy unto death, a death of martyrdom. That it was not the change of a proud and disappointed mind, quitting with disgust what he once loved too well, is evidenced by the variety of his labours, his active services, and continued presence in the busy thoroughfares of the world, by the cheerfulness, alacrity, energy, dexterity, and perseverance, with which he pleaded the cause of God among sinners. He reminds us of his firmness, as well as gentleness, when he declares: "What, mean ye to weep, and break my heart? for I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the Name of the LORD JESUS;" and of his ready accommodation of himself to the will of God, in all its forms, when he says, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some²."

3. But there is another kind of sudden conversion, or rather what appears to be such, not uncommonly found, and which may be that to which St. Paul's conversion is to be referred, and which I proceed to describe.

When men change their religious opinions really and truly, it is not merely their opinions that they change, but their hearts; and this evidently is not done in a moment—it is a slow work; nevertheless, though gradual, the change is often not uniform, but proceeds, so to say, by fits and starts, being influenced by external events, and other circumstances. This we see in the growth of plants, for instance; it is slow, gradual, continual; yet one day by chance they grow more than another, they make a shoot, or at least we are attracted to their growth on that day by some accidental circumstance, and it remains on our memory. So with our souls: we all, by nature, are far from God; nay, and we have all characters to form, which is a work of time. All this must have a beginning; and those who are now leading religious lives, have begun at different times. Baptism, indeed, is God's

² Acts xxi. 13. 1 Cor. ix. 22.

time, when HE first gives us grace; but alas! through the perverseness of our will, we do not follow HIM. There must be a time then for beginning. Many men do not at all recollect any one marked and definite time *when* they began to seek God. Others recollect a time, not, properly speaking, when they began, but when they made what may be called a shoot forward, the fact either being so, in consequence of external events, or at least for some reason or other their attention being called to it. Others, again, continue forming a religious character, and religious opinions as the result of it, though holding at the same time some outward profession of faith inconsistent with them; as, for instance, suppose it has been their unhappy condition to be brought up as heathens, Jews, infidels, or heretics. They hold the notions they have been taught for a long while, not perceiving that the character forming within them is at variance with these, till at length the inward growth forces itself forward, forces on the opinions accompanying it, and the dead outward surface of error, which has no root in their minds, from some accidental occurrence suddenly falls off; suddenly,—just as a building might suddenly fall, which had been going many years, and which falls at this moment rather than that, in consequence of some chance cause, as it is called, which we cannot detect.

Now in all these cases, one point of time is often taken by religious men, as if the very time of conversion, and as if it were sudden, though really, as is plain, in none of them is there any suddenness in the matter. In the last-taken instance, which might be in a measure, if we dare say it, St. Paul's case, the time when the formal outward profession of error fell off, is taken as the time of conversion. Others recollect the first occasion when any deep serious thought came into their minds, and reckon this as the date of their inward change. Others, again, recollect some intermediate point of time, when they first openly professed their faith, or dared do some noble deed for CHRIST's sake.

I might go on to show more particularly how what I have said applies to St. Paul; but as this would take too much time, I will only observe generally, that there was much in St. Paul's character which was not changed on his conversion, but merely directed to other and higher objects, and purified; it was his creed that was changed, and his soul by regeneration; and

though he was sinning most grievously and awfully when CHRIST appeared to him from heaven, he had then, as afterwards, a most burning energetic zeal for GOD, a most scrupulous strictness of life, an abstinence from all self-indulgence, much more from all approach to sensuality or carelessness of life, and an implicit obedience to what he considered GOD's will. It was pride which was his inward enemy—pride which needed an overthrow. He acted rather as a defender and protector, than a minister of what he considered the truth; he relied on his own views; he was positive and obstinate; he did not seek for light as a little child; he did not look out for a SAVIOUR who was to come, and he missed HIM when HE came.

But how great was the change in these respects when he became a servant of HIM whom he had persecuted! As he had been conspicuous for a proud confidence in self, on his privileges, on his knowledge, on his birth, on his observances, so he became conspicuous for his humility. What self-abasement when he says, "I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of GOD; but by the grace of GOD I am what I am." What keen and bitter remembrance of the past, when he says, "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief³." Ah! what utter self-abasement, what scorn and hatred of self, when he, who had been so pleased to be a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and a Pharisee, bore to be called, nay gloried for CHRIST's sake in being called, an apostate, the most odious and miserable of titles!—bore to be spurned and spat upon as a renegade, a traitor, a false-hearted and perfidious, a fallen, a lost son of his Church; a shame to his mother, and a curse to his countrymen. Such was the light in which those furious zealots looked on the great Apostle, who bound themselves together by an oath, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him. It was their justification in their own eyes, that he was a "pestilent fellow," a "stirrer of seditions," and an abomination amid sacred institutions which GOD had given.

And, lastly, what supported him in this great trial? that

³ 1 Tim. i. 13.

special mercy which converted him, which he, and he only, saw—the Face of JESUS CHRIST. That all-pitying, all-holy eye, which turned in love upon St. Peter when he denied HIM, and thereby roused him to repentance, looked on St. Paul also, while he persecuted HIM, and wrought in him a sudden conversion. “Last of all,” he says, “HE was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” One sight of that Divine Countenance, so tender, so loving, so majestic, so calm, was enough, first to convert him, then to support him on his way amid the bitter hatred and fury which he was to excite in those who hitherto had loved him.

And if such be the effect of a momentary vision of the glorious Presence of CHRIST, what think you, my brethren, will be their bliss, to whom it shall be given, this life ended, to see that Face eternally?

SERMON CLXII.

THE SHEPHERD OF OUR SOULS.

JOHN x. 11.

“I am the good Shepherd ; the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.”

OUR LORD here appropriates to HIMSELF the title under which HE had been foretold by the prophets. “David My servant shall be king over them,” says ALMIGHTY GOD by the mouth of Ezekiel : “and they all shall have one Shepherd.” And in the book of Zechariah, “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the LORD of Hosts ; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.” And in like manner St. Peter speaks of our returning “to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls¹.”

“The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.” In those countries of the East where our LORD appeared, the office of a shepherd is not only a lowly and simple office, and an office of trust, as it is with us, but, moreover, an office of great hardship and of peril. Our flocks are exposed to no enemies, such as our LORD describes. The shepherd here has no need to prove his fidelity to the sheep, by encounters with fierce beasts of prey. The hireling shepherd is not tried. But where our LORD dwelt

¹ Ez. xxxvii. 24. Zech. xiii. 7. 1 Pet. ii. 25.

in the days of His flesh it was otherwise. There it was true that the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep—"but he that is an hireling, and whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."

Our LORD found the sheep scattered, or, as HE had said shortly before, "All that ever came before ME are thieves and robbers:" and in consequence the sheep had no guide. Such were the Priests and Rulers of the Jews when CHRIST came; so that "when HE saw the multitudes, HE was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd²." Such, in like manner, were the rulers and prophets of Israel in the days of Ahab, when Micaiah, the LORD's Prophet, "saw all Israel scattered on the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd, and the LORD said, These have no master, let them return every man to his house in peace³." Such, too, were the shepherds in the time of Ezekiel, of whom the Prophet says, "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves; should not the shepherd feed the flocks? . . . They were scattered because there is no shepherd, and they became meat to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered⁴:" and in the time of the Prophet Zechariah, who says, "Woe to the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock⁵."

So was it all over the world when CHRIST came in His infinite mercy "to gather in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." And though for a moment, when in the conflict with the enemy the good Shepherd had to lay down His life for the sheep, they were left without a guide, (according to the prophecy already quoted, "Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered,") yet HE soon rose from death to live for ever according to that other prophecy which said, "He that scattered Israel will gather him, as a shepherd doth his flock⁶." And as HE says HIMSELF in the parable before us, "HE calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out, and goeth before them, and the sheep follow HIM, for they know His voice," so on His resurrection, while Mary wept, HE did call her by her name⁷, and

² Matt. ix. 36.

³ 1 Kings xxii. 17.

⁴ Ezek. xxxiv. 2. 5.

⁵ Zech. xi. 17.

⁶ Jer. xxxi. 10.

⁷ John xx. 16.

she turned herself and knew HIM by the ear whom she had not known by the eye. So, too, HE said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou ME⁸?" And HE added, "Follow ME." And so again HE and His angel told the women, "Behold HE goeth before you into Galilee . . . go tell MY brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see ME."

From that time the good Shepherd who took the place of the sheep, and died that they might live for ever, has gone before them: and "they follow the LAMB whithersoever HE goeth⁹;" going their way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feeding their kids beside the shepherds' tents.

No earthly images can come up to the awful and gracious truth, that GOD became the SON of Man—that the WORD became flesh, and was born of a woman. This ineffable mystery surpasses words of man. No titles of earth can CHRIST give to HIMSELF ever so lowly or mean, which will fitly show us His condescension. His act and deed is too great even for His own lips to utter it. Yet HE delights in the image contained in the text, as conveying to us, in such degree as we can receive it, some notion of the degradation, hardship, and pain, which HE underwent for our sake.

Hence it was prophesied under this figure by the Prophet Isaiah, "Behold the LORD GOD will come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for HIM . . . HE shall feed His flock like a shepherd; HE shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young¹." And again, HE promises by the mouth of Ezekiel, "Behold I, even I, will both search MY sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out MY sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day²." And the Psalmist says of HIM, "The LORD is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort³." And he addresses HIM, "Hear, O thou Shepherd of Israel, THOU that leadest Joseph like a sheep, show THYSELF also, THOU that sittest upon the Cheru-

⁸ John xxi. 15.

⁹ Rev. xiv. 4.

¹ Is. xl. 10, 11.

² Ez. xxxiv. 11, 12.

³ Ps. xxiii. 1, 2.

bims⁴.” And HE HIMSELF says in a parable, speaking of HIMSELF, “What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing⁵.”

Observe, my brethren, it is here said that CHRIST, the LORD of Angels, condescends to lay the lost sheep on His shoulders: in a former passage of the Prophet Isaiah it was said that HE should “gather them with His arms, and carry them in His bosom.” By carrying them in His bosom is meant the love HE bears them, and the fulness of His grace; by carrying them on His shoulders is signified the security of their dwelling-place—as of old time it was said of Benjamin, “the beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by HIM . . . and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders⁶,” and again of Israel, “As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.” And again, in the Prophet Isaiah, “Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts and upon the cattle . . . hearken unto ME, O house of Jacob . . . which are carried *by Me* from the womb . . . Even to your old age I am HE, and even to hoary hairs will I carry you: I have made and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you⁷.” HE alone, who “bowed HIMSELF and came down,” HE alone could do it; HE alone could bear a whole world’s weight, the load of a guilty world, the burden of man’s sin, the accumulated debt, past, present, and to come; the sufferings which we owed but could not pay, the wrath of GOD on the children of Adam; “in His own body on the tree⁸,” “being made a curse for us⁹,” “the just for the unjust, that HE might bring us unto God,” “through the Eternal SPIRIT offering HIMSELF without spot to GOD, and purging our conscience from dead works to serve the Living GOD¹.” Such was the deed of CHRIST, laying down His life for us: and therefore HE is called the Good Shepherd.

⁴ Ps. lxxx. 1.⁵ Luke xv. 4, 5.⁶ Deut. xxxiii. 12.⁷ Deut. xxxij. 11. Isa. xlv. 1—4.⁸ 1 Pet. ii. 24.⁹ Gal. iii. 13.¹ 1 Pet. iii. 18. Heb. ix. 14.

And hence, in like manner, from the time of Adam to that of CHRIST, a shepherd's work has been marked out with special Divine favour, as being a shadow of the good Shepherd who was to come. "Righteous Abel" was "a keeper of sheep," "and in process of time" he "brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering²." And who were they to whom the Angels first brought the news that a SAVIOUR was born? "Shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night³." And what is the description given of the chosen family when they descended into Egypt? "Thy servants," they say, "are shepherds, both we and also our fathers⁴;" and what, in consequence, was their repute in Egypt, which surely is a figure of the world? "Every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians⁵."

But there are three favoured servants of God in particular, special types of the SAVIOUR to come, men raised from low estate to great honour, in whom it was His will that His pastoral office should be thus literally fulfilled. And the first is Jacob, the father of the patriarchs, who appeared before Pharaoh. He became, as Abraham before him, a father of many nations; he "increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels, and asses⁶," and he was visited by supernatural favours, and had a new name given him—Israel for Jacob. But at the first he was, as his descendants solemnly confessed year by year, "a Syrian ready to perish;" and what was his employment? the care of sheep; and with what toil and suffering, and for how many years, we learn from his expostulation with his hard master and relative, Laban—"This twenty years have I been with thee," he says, "thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts, I brought not unto thee, I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; . . . and thou hast changed my wages ten times⁷."

² Gen. iv. 2. 4.³ Luke ii. 8.⁴ Gen. xlvii. 3.⁵ Gen. xlv. 34.⁶ Gen. xxx. 43.⁷ Gen. xxxi. 38—41.

Who is more favoured than Jacob, who was exalted to be a Prince with God, and to prevail by intercession? Yet you see, he is a shepherd, to image to us that mystical and true Shepherd and Bishop of souls who was to come. Yet there is a second and a third as highly favoured in various ways. The second is Moses, who drove away the rival shepherds and helped the daughters of the Priest of Midian to water their flock; and who, while he was keeping the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, saw the Angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. And the third is David, the man after God's own heart. He was "the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel⁸;" but he was found among the sheep. "He took him away from the sheep-folds; as he was following the ewes great with young ones, He took him; that he might feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he fed them with a faithful and true heart, and ruled them prudently with all his power⁹." Samuel came to Jesse, and looked through his seven sons, one by one, but found not him whom God had chosen. "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep." And when he came "he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to; and the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he¹." And again, after he had been in Saul's court, he "went and returned from Saul, to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem²;" and when he came to the army his brother reproached him for "leaving those his few sheep in the wilderness;" and when he was brought before Saul, he gave an account how a lion and a bear "took a lamb out of the flock," and he went after them, and slew them both, and delivered it. Such were the shepherds of old times, men at once of peace and of war—men of simplicity, indeed, "plain men living in tents," "the meekest of men," yet not easy, indolent men, sitting in green meadows, and by cool streams, but men of rough duties, who were under the necessity to suffer, though they had the opportunity to do exploits.

⁸ 2 Sam. xxiii. 1.

⁹ Ps. lxxviii. 71—73.

¹ 1 Sam. xvi. 11, 12.

² 1 Sam. xvii. 15. 28. 35—37.

And if such were the figures, how much more was the Truth itself, the good SHEPHERD, when HE came, both guileless and heroic? If shepherds are men of simple lives and obscure fortunes, uncorrupted and unknown in kings' courts and marts of commerce, how much more HE who was "the carpenter's Son," who was "meek and lowly of heart," who "did not strive nor cry," who "went about doing good," who "when HE was reviled, reviled not again," and who was "despised and rejected of men?" If, on the other hand, they are men of suffering and trial, how much more so HE who was "a man of sorrows," and who "laid down His life for the sheep?"

"That which was torn of beasts, I brought not unto thee," says Jacob; "I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it." And has not CHRIST undertaken the charge of our souls? Has HE not made HIMSELF answerable for us whom the devil had rent? Like the good Samaritan, "Take care of him," HE says, "and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee³." Or, as in another parable, under another image: "LORD, let it alone this year also . . . and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down⁴." "In the day the drought consumed me," says Jacob; and who was HE who at mid day sat down at that very Jacob's well, tired with His journey, and needing some of that water to quench His thirst, whereof "Jacob drank himself, and his children and his cattle?" Yet whereas HE had a living water to impart, which the world knew not of, HE preferred, as became the good SHEPHERD, to offer it to one of those lost sheep whom HE came to seek and to save, rather than to take at her hand the water from the well, or to accept the offer of His disciples, when they came with meat from the city, and said, "Master, eat." "The frost" consumed me "by night," says Jacob, "and my sleep departed from mine eyes;" and read we not of One whose wont it was to rise a long while before day, and continue in prayer to GOD? who passed nights in the mountain, or on the sea? who dwelt forty days in the wilderness? who in the evening and night of His passion,

³ Luke x. 35.

⁴ Luke xiii. 8, 9.

was forlorn in the bleak garden, or stripped and bleeding in the cold judgment hall?

Again: Moses, amid his sheep, saw the vision of God, and was told of God's adorable Name; and CHRIST, the true SHEPHERD, lived a life of contemplation in the midst of His laborious ministry; HE was transfigured on the mountain, and no man knew the SON but the FATHER, nor the FATHER but the SON.

Jacob endured, Moses meditated;—and David wrought. Jacob endured the frost, and heat, and sleepless nights, and paid the price of the lost sheep; Moses was taken up into the mount for forty days; David fought with the foe, and recovered the prey—he rescued it from the mouth of the lion, and the paw of the bear, and killed the ravenous beasts. CHRIST, too, not only suffered with Jacob, and was in contemplation with Moses, but fought and conquered with David. David defended his father's sheep at Bethlehem; CHRIST, born and heralded to the shepherds at Bethlehem, suffered on the Cross in order to conquer. HE came “from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah⁵,” but HE was “glorious in His apparel,” for HE trod the people “in His anger, and trampled them in His fury, and their blood was sprinkled upon His garments, and HE stained all His raiment.” Jacob was not as David, nor David as Jacob, nor either of them as Moses; but CHRIST was all three, as fulfilling all types, the lowly Jacob, the wise Moses, the heroic David, all in one—Priest, Prophet, and King.

My brethren, we say daily, “We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.” Again, we say, “We have erred and strayed from Thy ways, like lost sheep:” let us never forget these truths; let us never forget, on the one hand, that we are sinners; let us never forget, on the other hand, that CHRIST is our Guide and Guardian. HE is “the way, the truth, and the life⁶.” HE is a light unto our ways, and a lanthorn unto our paths. HE is our Shepherd, and the sheep know His voice. If we are His sheep, we shall hear it, recognize it, and obey it. Let us beware of not following when HE goes before: “HE goes before, and His sheep follow HIM, for they know His voice.” Let us beware

⁵ Isaiah lxiii. 1—3.

⁶ John xiv. 6.

of receiving His grace in vain. When GOD called Samuel, he answered, "Speak, LORD, for Thy servant heareth." When CHRIST called St. Paul, he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." Let us desire to know His voice⁷; let us pray for the gift of watchful ears and a willing heart. HE does not call all in one way; HE calls us each in His own way. To St. Peter He said, "Follow thou ME;" of St. John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Nor is it always easy to know His voice. St. John knew it, and said "It is the LORD," before St. Peter. Samuel did not know it till Eli told him. St. Paul asked, "Who art THOU, LORD?" We are bid, "try the spirits, whether they be of GOD." But whatever difficulty there be in knowing when CHRIST calls, and whither, yet at least let us look out for His call. Let us not be content with ourselves; let us not make our own hearts our home, or this world our home, or our friends our home; let us look out for a better country, that is, a heavenly. Let us look out for HIM who alone can guide us to that better country; let us call heaven our home, and this life a pilgrimage; let us view ourselves, as sheep in the trackless desert, who, unless they follow the shepherd, will be sure to lose themselves, sure to fall in with the wolf. We are safe while we keep close to HIM, and under His eye; but if we suffer Satan to gain an advantage over us, woe to us.

Blessed are they who give the flower of their days, and the strength of soul and body to HIM; blessed are they who in their youth turn to HIM who gave His life for them, and would fain give it to them and implant it in them, that they may live for ever. Blessed are they who resolve, come good, come evil, come sunshine, come tempest, come honour, come dishonour, that HE shall be their LORD and MASTER, their KING and GOD! They will come to a perfect end, and to peace at the last. They will, with Jacob, confess HIM, ere they die, as "the GOD that fed them all their life long unto that day, the Angel which redeemed them from all evil⁷;" with Moses, that "as is their day, so shall their strength be;" and with David, that in "the valley of the shadow of death, they fear no evil, for HE is with them, and

⁷ Gen. xlviii. 15, 16.

that His rod and His staff comfort them ;” for “ when they pass through the waters HE will be with them, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow them ; when they walk through the fire, they shall not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon them, for HE is the LORD their GOD, the HOLY ONE of Israel, their SAVIOUR.”

SERMON CLXIII.

RELIGIOUS JOY¹.

LUKE ii. 10, 11.

“ And the angel said unto them, Fear not : for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a SAVIOUR, which is CHRIST the LORD.”

THERE are two principal lessons which we are taught on the great Festival which we this day celebrate, lowliness and joy. This surely is a day, of all others, in which is set before us the heavenly excellence and the acceptableness in God's sight of that state which most men have, or may have, allotted to them, humble or private life, and cheerfulness in it. If we consult the writings of historians, philosophers, and poets of this world, we shall be led to think great men happy; we shall be led to fix our minds and hearts upon high or conspicuous stations, strange adventures, powerful talents to cope with them, memorable struggles, and great destinies. We shall consider that the highest course of life is the mere pursuit, not the enjoyment of good.

But when we think of this day's Festival, and what we commemorate upon it, a new and very different scene opens upon us.

¹ For Christmas-day.

First, we are reminded that though this life must ever be a life of toil and effort, yet that, properly speaking, we have not to seek our highest good. It is found, it is brought near us, in the descent of the SON of GOD from His FATHER'S bosom to this world. It is stored up among us on earth. No longer need men of ardent minds weary themselves in the pursuit of what they fancy may be chief goods; no longer have they to wander about and encounter peril in quest of that unknown blessedness to which their hearts naturally aspire, as they did in heathen times. The text speaks to them as to all, "Unto you," it says, "is born this day in the city of David a SAVIOUR, which is CHRIST the LORD."

Nor again need we go in quest of any of those things which this vain world calls great and noble. CHRIST has altogether dishonoured what the world esteems, when HE took on HIMSELF a rank and station which the world despises. No lot could be more humble and more ordinary than that which the SON of GOD chose for HIMSELF.

So that we have on the Feast of the Nativity these two lessons; instead of anxiety within and despondence without, instead of a weary search after great things, to be cheerful and joyful; and again, to be so in the midst of those obscure and ordinary circumstances of life which the world passes over and thinks scorn of.

Let us consider this more at length, as contained in the gracious narrative of which the text is part.

1. First, what do we read just before the text? that there were certain shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night, and Angels appeared to them. Why should the heavenly hosts appear to these shepherds? What was it in them which attracted the attention of the Angels and the LORD of Angels? Were these shepherds learned, distinguished, or powerful? Were they especially known for piety and gifts? Nothing is said to make us think so. Faith, we may safely say, they had, or some of them, for to him that hath more shall be given; but there is nothing to show that they were holier and more enlightened than other good men of the time, who waited for the consolation of Israel. Nay, there is no reason to suppose that they were better than the common run of men in their circumstances, simple, and fearing GOD, but without any great advances in piety, or any very formed habits of religion. Why then were they chosen?

for their poverty's sake and obscurity. ALMIGHTY GOD looks with a sort of especial love, or (as we may term it) affection upon the lowly. Perhaps it is that man, a fallen, dependent, and destitute creature, is more in his proper place when he is in lowly circumstances, and that power and riches, though unavoidable in the case of some, are unnatural appendages to man, as such. Just as there are trades and callings which are unbecoming, though requisite; and while we profit by them, and honour those the more who engage in them, yet we feel we are glad that they are not ours; as we feel grateful and respectful towards a soldier's profession, yet do not affect it; so in God's sight greatness is less acceptable than obscurity. It becomes us less.

The shepherds, then, were chosen on account of their lowliness, to be the first to hear of the LORD's nativity, a secret which none of the princes of this world knew.

And what a contrast is presented to us when we take into account who were our LORD's messengers to them! The Angels who excel in strength, these did His bidding towards the shepherds. Here the highest and the lowest of God's rational creatures are brought together. A set of poor men, engaged in a life of hardship, exposed at that very time to the cold and darkness of the night, watching their flocks, with the view of scaring away beasts of prey or robbers; they, when they are thinking of nothing but earthly things, counting over the tale of their sheep, keeping their dogs by their side, and listening to the noises over the plain, considering the weather and watching for the day, suddenly are met by far other visitants than they conceived. We know the contracted range of thought, the minute and ordinary objects, or rather the one or two objects, to and fro again and again without variety, which engage the minds of men exposed to such a life of heat, cold, and wet, hunger and nakedness, hardship and servitude. They cease to care much for any thing, but go on in a sort of mechanical way, without heart, and still more without reflection.

To men so circumstanced the Angel appeared, to open their minds, and to teach them not to be downcast and in bondage because they were low in the world. He appeared as if to show them that God had chosen the poor in this world to be heirs of His kingdom, and so to do honour to their lot. "Fear not," he

said, "for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a SAVIOUR, which is CHRIST the LORD."

2. And now comes a second lesson, which I have said may be gained from the Festival. The Angel honoured a humble lot by his very appearing to the shepherds; next he taught it to be joyful by his message. He disclosed good tidings so much above this world as to equalize high and low, rich and poor, one with another. He said, "Fear not." This is a mode of address frequent in Scripture, as you may have observed, as if man needed some such assurance to support him, especially in God's presence. The Angel said, "Fear not," when he saw the alarm which his presence caused among the shepherds. Even a lesser wonder would have reasonably startled them. Therefore the Angel said, "Fear not." We are naturally afraid of any messenger from the other world, for we have an uneasy conscience when left to ourselves, and think that his coming forebodes evil. Besides, we so little realize the unseen world, that were Angel or spirit to present himself before us, we should be startled even from our unbelief, a truth being brought home to our minds which we never apprehended before. So for one or other reason the shepherds were sore afraid when the glory of the LORD shone around about them. And the Angel said, "Fear not." A little religion makes us afraid; when a little light is poured in upon the conscience, there is a darkness visible; nothing but sights of woe and terror; the glory of God alarms while it shines around. His holiness, the range and difficulties of His commandments, the greatness of His power, the faithfulness of His word, frighten the sinner, and men seeing him afraid, think religion has made him so, whereas he is not yet religious at all. They call him religious, when he is merely conscience-stricken. But religion itself, far from inculcating alarm and terror, says, in the words of the Angel, "Fear not;" for such is His mercy, while ALMIGHTY God has poured about us His glory, yet it is a consolatory glory, for it is the light of His glory in the face of JESUS CHRIST². Thus the heavenly herald tempered the too dazzling brightness of the Gospel on that first Christmas. The glory of God at first alarmed the

² 2 Cor. iv. 6.

shepherds, so he added the tidings of good, to work in them a more wholesome and happy temper. Then they rejoiced.

“Fear not,” said the Angel, “for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a SAVIOUR, which is CHRIST the LORD.” And then, when he had finished his announcement, “suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.” Such were the words which the blessed spirits who minister to CHRIST and His Saints, spoke on that gracious night to the shepherds, to rouse them out of their cold and famished mood into great joy; to teach them that they were objects of God’s love as much as the greatest of men on earth; nay more so, for to them first HE had imparted the news of what that night was happening. His SON was then born into the world. Such events are told to friends and intimates, to those whom we love, to those who will sympathise with us, not to strangers. How could ALMIGHTY GOD be more gracious, and show His favour more impressively to the lowly and the friendless, than by hastening (if I may use the term) to confide the great, the joyful secret, to the shepherds keeping watch over their sheep by night?

The Angel then gave the first lesson of mingled humility and joyfulness; but an infinitely greater one was behind in the event itself, to which he directed the shepherds, in that birth itself of the Holy Child JESUS. This he intimated in these words: “Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” Doubtless when they heard the LORD’S CHRIST was born into the world, they would look for HIM in kings’ palaces. They would not be able to fancy that HE had become one of themselves, or that they might approach HIM; therefore the angel thus warned them where to find HIM, not only as a sign, but as a lesson also.

“The shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the LORD hath made known to us.” Let us too go with them, to contemplate that second and greater miracle to which the angel directed them, the Nativity of CHRIST. St. Luke says of the Blessed Virgin, “She brought forth her first-born SON, and

wrapped HIM in swaddling clothes, and laid HIM in a manger." What a wonderful sign is this to all the world, and therefore the Angel repeated it to the shepherds: "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." The God of heaven and earth, the Divine WORD, who had been in glory with the Eternal FATHER from the beginning, HE was at this time born into this world of sin as a little infant. HE, as at this time, lay in His mother's arms, to all appearance helpless and powerless, and was wrapped by Mary in an infant's bands, and laid to sleep in a manger. The SON of GOD Most High, who created the worlds, became flesh, though remaining what HE was before. HE became flesh as truly as if HE had ceased to be what HE was, and had actually been changed into flesh. HE submitted to be the offspring of Mary, to be taken up in the hands of a mortal, to have a mother's eye fixed upon HIM, and to be cherished in a mother's bosom. A daughter of man became the mother of GOD—to her, indeed, an unspeakable gift of grace; but in HIM what condescension! What an emptying of His glory to become man! and not only an helpless infant, though that were humiliation enough, but to inherit all the infirmities and imperfections of our nature which were possible to a sinless soul. What were His thoughts, if we may venture to use such language or admit such a reflection concerning the Infinite, when human feelings, human sorrows, human wants, first became His? What a mystery is there from first to last in the SON of GOD becoming man! Yet in proportion to the mystery is the grace and mercy of it; and as is the grace, so is the greatness of the fruit of it. Let us steadily contemplate the mystery, and say whether any consequence is too great to follow from so marvellous a dispensation; any mystery so great, any grace so overpowering, as that which is already manifested in the incarnation and death of the Eternal SON. Were we told that the effect of it would be to make us as seraphim, that we were to ascend as high as HE descended low—would that startle us after the Angels' news to the shepherds? And this indeed is the effect of it, so far as such words may be spoken without impiety. Men we remain, but not mere men, but gifted with a measure of all those perfections which CHRIST has in fulness, partaking each in his own degree of His divine nature so fully, that the only reason (so to speak) why His saints

are not really like HIM, is that it is impossible, that HE is the CREATOR, and they His creatures; yet still so, that they are all but divine, all that they can be made without violating the incommunicable majesty of the Most HIGH. Surely in proportion to His glory is His power of glorifying; so that to say that through HIM we shall be made all but gods, though it is to say that we are infinitely below the adorable CREATOR, is to say, and truly, that we shall be higher than every other being in the world; higher than angels or archangels, cherubim or seraphim,—that is, not here, or in ourselves, but in heaven and in CHRIST. CHRIST, already the first-fruits of our race, GOD and man, having ascended high above all creatures, and we through His grace tending to the same high blessedness, having the earnest of His glory given here, and (if we be found faithful) the fulness of it hereafter.

If all these things be so, surely the lesson of joy which the Incarnation gives us, is as impressive as the lesson of humility. St. Paul gives us the one lesson in his epistle to the Philippians: "Let this mind be in you which was also in CHRIST JESUS, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with GOD, but made HIMSELF of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men³;" and St. Peter gives us the lesson of joyfulness: "whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see HIM not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

Take these thoughts with you, my brethren, to your homes on this festive day; let them be with you in your family and social meetings. It is a day of joy: it is good to be joyful—it is wrong to be otherwise. For one day we may put off the burden of our polluted consciences, and rejoice in the perfections of our SAVIOUR CHRIST, without thinking of ourselves, without thinking of our own miserable uncleanness; but contemplating His glory, His righteousness, His purity, His majesty, His overflowing love. We may rejoice in the LORD, and in all His creatures see HIM. We may enjoy His temporal bounty, and partake the

³ Phil. ii. 5—7. 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.

pleasant things of earth with HIM in our thoughts ; we may rejoice in our friends for His sake, loving them most especially because HE has loved them.

“ God has not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with HIM.” Let us seek the grace of a cheerful heart, an even temper, sweetness, gentleness, and brightness of mind, as walking in His light, and by His grace. Let us pray HIM to give us the spirit of ever-abundant, ever-springing love, which overpowers and sweeps away the vexations of life by its own richness and strength, and which above all things unites us to HIM who is the fountain and the centre of all mercy, lovingkindness, and joy.

SERMON CLXIV.

IGNORANCE OF EVIL¹.

GEN. iii. 22.

“And the LORD GOD said, Behold the man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil.”

It is plain that the temptation under which man fell in paradise was this, an ambitious curiosity after knowledge which was not allowed him : next came the desire of the eyes and the flesh, but the forbidden tree was called the tree of *knowledge* ; the Tempter *promised* knowledge ; and after the fall ALMIGHTY GOD pronounced, as in the text, that man had gained it. “Behold, the man is become as one of Us, to *know* good and evil.”

You see it is said, “man is become *as one of Us* to know good and evil,” because GOD does know evil as well as good. This is His wonderful incommunicable attribute ; and man sought to share in what GOD was, but could not without ceasing to be what GOD was also, holy and perfect. It is the incommunicable attribute of GOD to know evil without experiencing it. But man, when he would be as GOD, could only attain the shadow of a likeness which as yet he had not, by losing the substance which he had already. He shared in GOD’s knowledge by losing His image. GOD knows evil and is pure from it—man plunged into evil and so knew it.

Our happiness as well as duty lies in not going beyond our measure—in being contented with what we are—with what GOD makes us. They who seek after forbidden knowledge, of what-

¹ For Innocents’ Day.

ever kind, will find they have lost their place in the scale of beings in so doing, and are cast out of the great circle of God's family.

It is, I say, God's incommunicable attribute, as HE did not create, so not to experience sin—and as HE permits it, so also to know it; to permit it without creating it, to know it without experiencing it—a wonderful and incomprehensible attribute truly, yet involved, perhaps, in the very circumstance that HE permits it. For HE is everywhere and in all, and nothing exists except in and through HIM. Mysterious as it is, the very prison beneath the earth, its chains and fires, and impenitent inmates, the very author of evil himself is sustained in existence by GOD, and without GOD would fall into nothing. God is in hell as well as in Heaven, a thought which almost distracts the mind to think of. The awful GOD! “Whither shall I go from Thy SPIRIT, or whither shall I go from Thy presence? If I climb up into heaven THOU art there; if I go down to hell THOU art there also.” Where life is, there is HE; and though it be but the life of death—the living death of eternal torment—HE is the principle of it. And being thus intimately present with the very springs of thought, and the first elements of all being, being the sustaining cause of all spirits, whether they be good or evil, HE is intimately present *with* evil, being pure from it—and knows what it is, as being with and in the wretched atoms which originate it.

If there be this sort of connexion between GOD's knowledge and sufferance of evil, see what an ambition it was in our first parents to desire to know it without experiencing it; it was, indeed, to desire to be as gods, to know the secrets of the prison-house, and to see the worm that dieth not, yet remain innocent and happy.

This they understood not; they desired something which they knew not that they could not have, remaining as they were; they did not see how knowledge and experience went together in the case of human nature; and Satan did not undeceive them. They ate of the tree which was to make them wise, and, alas, they saw clearly what sin was, what shame, what death, what hell, what despair. They lost GOD's presence, and they gained the knowledge of evil. They lost Eden and they gained a conscience.

This, in fact, is the knowledge of good and evil. Lost spirits do not know good. Angels do not know evil. Beings like ourselves, fallen beings, fallen yet not cast away, know good and evil; evil not external to them, nor yet one with them; but in them, yet not simply of them. Such was the fruit of the forbidden tree, as it remains in us to this day.

We do not know in what the duty and happiness of other beings consist; but at least this seems to have been man's happiness in Paradise, not to think about himself or to be conscious of himself. Such, too, to recur to the parallel especially suggested on this day, seems to be the state of children. They do not reflect upon themselves. Such, too, seems to be the state of those orders of Angels whose life is said to consist in contemplation—for what is contemplation but a resting in the thought of God to the forgetfulness of self? Hence the Saints are described as “*Virgins who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.*” But Adam, discontented with what he was, pined after a knowledge which he could not obtain from without—which he could only have from miserable experience within—from moral disorders within him, and from thoughts drawn to the contemplation of himself in consequence of those disorders. He obtained the wished-for knowledge; and his first recorded act afterwards was one of reflection upon self, and he hid himself among the trees of the garden. He was no longer fitted for contemplating glories without him; his attention was arrested to the shame that was upon him.

What is so miserably seen in the history of our first parents has been the temptation and sin of their posterity ever since,—indulgence is forbidden, unlawful, hurtful, unprofitable knowledge; as some instances will show.

1. I ought to notice in the first place that evil curiosity which stimulates young persons to intrude into things of which it is their blessedness to be ignorant. Satan gains our souls step by step; and his allurements are the knowledge of what is wrong. He first tempts them to the knowledge, and then to the commission of sin. Depend on it that our happiness and our glory, in these matters, is to be ignorant, as well as to be guiltless. St. Paul says that “it is a shame even to speak” of those things which are done by the sons of Belial in secret. O thoughtless,

and worse, O cruel to your own selves, all ye who read what ye should not read, and hear what ye should not hear! O how will you repent of your folly afterwards! O what bitter feelings, O what keen pangs, will shoot through your souls hereafter, at the memory, when you look back, of what has come of that baneful curiosity! O how will you despise yourselves, O how weep at what you have brought on you! At this day surely there is a special need of this warning; for this is a day when nothing is not pried into, nothing is not published, nothing is not laid before all men.

2. In the next place I would observe, that the pursuit of science, which characterizes these times, is very likely to draw us aside into a sin of a particular kind, if we are not on our guard. We read, in the book of Acts, of many who used curious arts burning their books; that is, there are kinds of knowledge which are forbidden to the Christian. Now this seems strange to the world in this day. The only forbidden subjects which they can fancy, are such as are not *true*—fictions, impostures, superstitions, and the like. Falsehood they think wrong; false religions, for instance, *because* false. But they are perplexed when told that there may be branches of real knowledge, yet forbidden. Yet it has ever been considered in the Church, as in Scripture, that soothsaying, consulting the stars, magic, and similar arts, are unlawful—unlawful, even though not false; and Scripture certainly speaks as if at least some of them were more than merely a pretended knowledge and a pretended power; whereas men now-a-days have got to think that they are wrong, merely because *frauds* and *impostures*; and if they found them not so, they would be very slow to understand how still they are unlawful. They have not mastered the idea that real knowledge may be forbidden us.

3. Next it is obvious to speak of those melancholy persons who boast themselves on what they call their knowledge of the world and of life. There are men, alas not a few, who look upon acquaintance with evil as if a part of their education. Instead of shunning vice and sin, they try it, if for no other reason, simply for this—that they may have knowledge of it. They mix with various classes of men, and they throw themselves into the manners and opinions of all in turn. They are ready-witted perhaps, prompt and versatile, and easily adapt themselves so as to please

and get acquainted with those they fall in with. They have no scruples of conscience hindering them from complying with whatever is proposed ; they are of any form of religion, have lax or correct morals, according to the occasion. They can revel with those that revel, and they can speak serious things when their society is serious. They travel up and down the country perhaps, or they are of professions or pursuits which introduce them to men of various languages, or which take them abroad, and they see persons of opposite creeds and principles, and whatever they fall in with they take as so many facts, merely as facts of human nature, not as things right or wrong according to a certain fixed standard independent of themselves. Now whatever of religion or truth remains in our fallen nature is not on the surface: these men, then, studying what is uppermost, are in fact but studying all that is evil in man, and in consequence they have very low notions of man. They are very sceptical about the existence of principle and virtue ; they think all men equally swayed by worldly, selfish, or sensual motives, though some hide their own better than others, or have feelings and likings of a more refined character. And having given in to sin themselves, they have no higher principle within them to counteract the effect of what they see without ; all their notions of man's nature, capabilities, and destinies, are derived from, and are measured by, what goes on in the world, and accordingly they apply all their knowledge to bad purposes. They think they know, and they do know too truly on the whole, the motives and inducements which will prevail with men ; and they use their knowledge to overreach, deceive, seduce, corrupt, or sway those with whom they have to do.

4. Another very different class of persons who study evil and pride themselves upon it, and are degraded by it, are those who indulge themselves in contemplating and dwelling on the struggle between right and wrong in their own minds. There have been from time to time men of morbid imaginations, of any or no religious creed, who have so exercised themselves. Indeed there has been a large school of writers in very various departments, for years, I may say centuries past, though happily they are diminishing now, who delight in bringing out into open day all the weaknesses and inconsistencies of human nature ; nay worse, take

pains to describe bad men, and how they feel, and what they say; who interest the mind in bad men, nay in bad Angels, as if Satan might be thought of otherwise than with shuddering. And there are others, men of mistaken religious views, who think that religion consists in dwelling on and describing the struggle between grace and corrupt nature in the soul. CHRIST has brought us light and life, and would have us put off what we are, and follow HIM, who knew no sin. But these men, far from rising even to the aspiration after perfection, do not advance in their notion of spiritual religion beyond the idea of declaring and lamenting their want of it. Confession is with them perfection; nay, it is almost the test of a Christian, to be able to discourse upon his inward corruption. It is well to confess sin in detail with shame as an act of penitence; it is a snare to speak of it vaguely and in public.

5. Lastly, even when used rightly, the knowledge of sin is not without its danger. As mediciners would not exist were there no illness or disease, so it is mental disease which gives rise to casuists. Pain leads us to think of our bodies, and sin of our souls. Were our souls in perfect harmony, they would act like an instrument in tune; we should with difficulty divide the sounds, even if we would; but it is the discordance, the jar within us, which leads us to a serious contemplation of what we are. The same remark obviously applies to a great deal of theological knowledge, on which men who have it are tempted to pride themselves; I mean exact knowledge of heresies and the like. The love of God alone can give such knowledge its right direction. There is the danger lest men so informed find themselves scrutinizing when they should be adoring, reasoning when they should be believing, comparing when they should be choosing, and proving when they should be acting. We know two things of the angels—that they cry Holy, Holy, Holy, and that they do God's bidding. Worship and service make up their blessedness; and such is our blessedness in proportion as we approach them. But all exercises of mind which lead us to reflect upon and ascertain our state; to know what worship is, and why we worship; what service is, and why we serve; what our feelings imply, and what our words mean, tend to divert our minds from the one thing needful, unless we are practised and expert in

using them. All proofs of religion, evidences, proofs of particular doctrines, scripture proofs, and the like; these certainly furnish scope for the exercise of great and admirable powers of mind, and it would be fanatical to disparage or disown them; but it requires a mind rooted and grounded in love not to be dissipated by them. As for truly religious minds, they, when so engaged, instead of mere disputing, are sure to turn inquiry into meditation, exhortation into worship, and argument into teaching.

Reflections such as these, followed up, show us how different is our state from that for which God made us. HE meant us to be simple, and we are unreal; HE meant us to think no evil, and a thousand associations, bad, trifling, or unworthy, attend our every thought. HE meant us to be drawn on to the glories without us, and we are drawn back and (as it were) fascinated by the miseries within us. And hence it is that the whole structure of society is so artificial; no one trusts another if he can help it; safeguards, checks, and securities are ever sought after. No one means exactly what he says, for our words have lost their natural meaning, and even an Angel could not use them naturally, for every mind being different from every other, they have no distinct meaning. What, indeed, is the very function of society, as it is at present, but a rude attempt to cover the degradation of the fall, and to make men feel respect for themselves, and enjoy it in the eyes of others, without returning to God. This is what we should especially guard against, because there is so much of it in the world. I mean, not an abandonment of evil, not a sweeping away and cleansing out of the corruption which sin has bred within us, but a smoothing it over, an outside delicacy and polish, an ornamenting the surface of things while "within are dead men's bones and all uncleanness;" making the garments, which at first were given for decency, a means of pride and vanity. Men give good names to what is evil, they sanctify bad principles and feelings; and, knowing that there is vice and error, selfishness, pride, and ambition, in the world, they attempt, not to root out these evils, not to withstand these errors;—that they think a dream, the dream of theorists who do not know the world;—but to cherish and form alliance with them, to use them, to make a science of selfishness, to flatter and indulge error, and to bribe

vice with the promise of bearing with it, so that it does but keep in the shade.

But let us, finding ourselves in the state in which we are, take those means which alone are really left us, which alone become us. Adam, when he had sinned, and felt himself fallen, instead of honestly abandoning what he had become, would fain have hid himself. He went a step further. He did not give up what he now was, partly from dread of God, partly from dislike of what he had been. He had learnt to love sin and to fear God's justice. But CHRIST has purchased for us what we lost in Adam, our garment of innocence. HE has bid us and enabled us to become as little children; HE has purchased for us the grace of *simplicity*, which, though one of the highest, is very little thought about, is very little sought after. We have, indeed, a general idea what love is, and hope, and faith, and truth, and purity, though a poor idea; but we are almost blind to what is one of the first elements of Christian perfection, that simple-mindedness which springs from the heart's being *whole* with God, entire, undivided. And those who think they have an idea of it, commonly rise no higher than to mistake for it a mere weakness and softness of mind, which is but its counterfeit. To be simple is to be like the Apostles and first Christians. Our SAVIOUR says, "Be ye harmless," or simple, "as doves." And St. Paul, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and *simple concerning evil*²." Again, "That ye may be *blameless and harmless*, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation³." And he speaks of the "testimony of" his own "conscience, that in *simplicity* and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God," he had his conversation in the world and towards his disciples. Let us pray God to give us this great and precious gift; that we may blot out from our memory all that offends HIM; unlearn all that knowledge which sin has taught us; rid ourselves of selfish motives, self-conceit, and vanity, littlenesses, envying, grudgings, meannesses; turn from all cowardly, low, miserable ways; and escape from servile fears, the fear of man, vague anxieties of conscience, and superstitions. So that we may have the boldness and frankness of those who are as if they

² Rom. xvi. 19.

³ Phil. ii. 15.

had no sin, from having been cleansed from it; the uncontaminated hearts, open countenances, and untroubled eyes of those who neither suspect, nor conceal, nor shun, nor are jealous; in a word, so that we may have confidence in HIM, that we may stay on HIM, and rest in the thoughts of HIM, instead of plunging amid the thickets of this world; that we may bear His eye and His voice, and know no knowledge but the knowledge of HIM and JESUS CHRIST crucified, and desire no objects but what He has blessed and bid us pursue.







